WHEN THE COCK CROWS

By WALDRON BAILY

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When the Cock Crows

He bore her with what haste he could to the landing and gently placed her within the blankets.

When the Cock Crows

BY

WALDRON BAILY

Author of "Heart of the Blue Ridge," "The Homeward Trail," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

G. W. GAGE

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TO

Hon. Josephus Daniels

As a token of the author's admiration and respect, for one who in the greatest crisis in history has demonstrated to the public those qualities of courage, determination and achievement that his friends have always known him to possess.

155993

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WHEN THE COCK CROWS

CHAPTER I

Ichabod's Island

THE tide was at ebb. The noisily rushing spume-spotted waters of the sea were pounding the hard-sand shore of the easterly side of a beautiful island, nestling as a jewel in its setting just within the Capes, which form the shores on either side of Beaufort Inlet, but so exposed that when the winds blow from the sea the full force of the breakers is felt at this point. As this small bit of land is low-lying, more than once when a southeaster has raged, the tiny isle has become entirely submerged.

Man has placed but one habitation upon this toy of the great waters, and that a fisherman's shack, surrounded with the usual net-drying racks and other crude tools of the

fisherfolk. One would rightly guess that the occupant of an abode built upon such a tiny bit of old mother earth must be a hardy customer, who understood the ways of the winds and sea and who dared combat them.

It is sunrise. The door of the hut swings on its heavy hinges. A sturdy-looking old fellow with grizzled beard and flowing locks steps out of the shack, and, as has been his wont for years, he scans the horizon for a sail or perchance for other more modern craft of the sea.

In his arms, he is tenderly carrying a large Dominick rooster, which, judging from his length of spurs, and scaly legs, has lingered many summers. Satisfying himself that there is no boat in sight, to break the monotony of the view, Captain Ichabod places his only living companion—as he expresses it, his poultry alarm clock—upon the ground, and from a pocket produces a handful of corn, which the old cock greedily devours.

These two have been companions for a long time. Captain Ichabod found him one morning perched upon the top of a floating crate, washed from the deck of a schooner that had

gone upon the beach in a booming southeaster. The Captain had proved a life-saver indeed to the proud old bird. Ichabod, when he first spied Shrimp, as he afterward named this bit of flotsam, was wildly anxious to save the creature so it might have a life on shore suited to its nature and desires. Then it flashed upon him that his antiquated and well-worn alarm clock had ceased to work. It occurred to him that the rooster's crowing would suffice to advise him of the hour, and that there would be no need to buy another clock.

The Captain was a woman-hater. This fact accounted for his choosing to live as a hermit on the bit of sand, which he had grown to love. But that loneliness was a trial to Shrimp, who naturally desired a harem of his own. Many times, when the wind was from the mainland, Captain Ichabod had heard the far-away crow of a barnyard fowl, and had gravely and criticizingly listened as Shrimp returned the salute in lusty manner. He had seen the bird swell in rage, and his comb turn red in jealous envy of the other rooster on the mainland.

Captain Ichabod had now come to busying himself with fishing by hook and line for blue fish and sheepshead. In addition he set a line of gill nets in the cove for mullet or any other fish that might become entangled within their meshes. On all his excursions Shrimp accompanied his master. He would perch himself proudly upon the centerboard box. More than once, before becoming a seasoned sailor, he had failed to dodge the boom to which the little leg o' mutton sail was attached, and had been knocked from his perch when Uncle Ichabod for a joke let the boat jibe in a flaw of the wind. But Shrimp learned. He learned to dodge the boom. He became, under stress of circumstances, an expert sailor—and was never seasick.

When Shrimp had finished his meal, Ichabod addressed the mangy-looking bird very gravely:

"Shrimp, thar hain't nary sail nor steamer smoke in sight off the Capes and I 'low thar has a dozen skippers seen that-thar same mare's tail as did I last night, and has had the good common sense to haul to in the

hook o' the Cape ter ride out the blow that is sure ter come. May the sarpants o' Davy Jones' have mercy on him or her as don't take kivver; me an' you, rooster, 'll have ter do our hook an' linin' in the Spar Channel on this ebb fer so soon as she hauls a leetle more to the south'ard thar is goin' ter be hell kicked up in the Inlet an' me and yo', ole feathers an' comb, had better do our anglin' clost enough that we can shoot inter this home harbor without loosin' o' our rag."

Captain Ichabod busied himself with getting his leads and lines in shape. He cut up a half-dozen mullets for bait. Then he picked up the mast, around which was wrapped a patchwork of canvas, very snugly. It felt at home there for it had been thus rolled around the mast time and again through many years. Captain Ichabod now walked to the red skiff. At his heels Shrimp stalked with great dignity. The Captain stepped the mast, arranged the halyards, and pushed off. The sail caught the wind and Captain Ichabod at the tiller was off for the Spar Channel fishing grounds.

When he had arrived and thrown his

anchor overboard, the Captain addressed Shrimp with much solemnity.

"Shrimp, ye air a heap o' company to the ole man, but ye wa'n't built by God A'mighty fer a sailin' mate, all he fixed ye fer was to peck an' scratch an' fight—oh, yes, an' I like ter forgot the crow."

Then nonchalantly he remarked:

"An' thar would be a heap more peace in the world to-day if he had o' built all kinds o' *Hens* without thar tarnation cackle."

When Captain Icky mentioned the word cackle he thought he could detect a dejected look upon the countenance of his feathered friend, and in a sympathetic voice to ease the rooster's feelings, said:

"Wall, rooster, I must say that yo'r women folks was made with the only kind of cackle that has done men folks any good, but gosh darned if it hain't a right-smart bit since I's et an aig!"

Then, having thus relieved himself, Ichabod tossed his heavily sinkered lines into the swift tide. The fish were hungry, and he was kept busy hauling them in.

The swell began to increase. The small

craft began to rock uncomfortably. The sun was hidden by a red cloud that banked in the eastern sky. Captain Ichabod knew the signs. He pulled in his line and hooks, made sail, and beat across to the point where nestled the life-saving station. There he would read the barometer, have a chat and a meal with the men, and afterward make a quick run home before the wind.

At the life-saving station, he found the barometer indicated storm, as he had feared.

After a hearty dinner, and a pipe with yarns, Captain Ichabod set sail for the Island, and made it safely, in spite of the rising storm.

The Captain realized that a gale was brewing. He gathered up his nets from their racks. He made them snug in the shack, and stowed away everything movable. He was weather-wise. He would not be caught unawares. A high tide had more than once taught him the lesson of that beach. He had the red skiff hauled well up out of harm's way. There was, too, an extra anchor tied to the painter. Captain Ichabod and the rooster entered their cottage, for refuge from the wind that was now blowing dangerously.

The storm reached such proportions that from his window to seaward it was no longer possible to make out through the rain and spray the broad crêpe-like bands of black and white painted upon the great, towering lighthouse, at the extreme point of Cape Lookout, a few miles to the eastward. The shack was fairly shaking in the West India hurricane—for such it proved to be. . . . And great was the devastation wrought that night by both wind and wave.

About midnight, Captain Ichabod, feeling that it was not quite safe to retire, stood in the open doorway. He little minded the pelting of the rain as it drove against his weathered cheek. He had donned his oilskins, hat and slicker, and was peering intently seaward. He had been to his skiff and had dragged it a couple of rods further up on the sand as a measure of safety. A yellow flash showed dimly on the black storm clouds that banked the horizon to the north of the Cape—wherein nestled a tiny harbor of refuge. Those who knew took advantage of this retreat in times of tempest. . . . Wo unto the hapless seafarer, unknowing the way.

It did not take a second flash for the practised eye of the lone man in oilskins to recognize that this was the thing he had expected—even while praying God that it might not be. It was the rocket signal of a boat in distress. Within sound of the breakers, that could not be seen in the pitch black, was somewhere a mass of timber and iron, burdened with cargo and human freight. And that mass, which was a ship, dragged its anchor, as if that anchor were a toy—foot by foot to sure destruction on a beach that has known a hundred wrecks.

The rockets continued to flare. Closer and closer to the outer shoals of the beach they beamed. The ship was swiftly and surely going to its doom.

Turning his face to the clouded heavens, and raising his voice in a final appeal, Uncle Ichabod prayed:

"God help the boys in such a surf."

At the point where the ship was making the distress signals, the coast offered only a narrow strip of sand, running from the Cape to Ocracoke Inlet—many miles to the northeast.

The old fisherman's face was ashen. There

was nothing that he could do except stand and helplessly watch the final disaster. He realized that the craft was doomed. He was powerless to interfere, although in despair over this catastrophe before his very eyes. He turned away, and entered his little house, and tried to sleep. But he was wakeful, and found himself murmuring prayers for those who went down to the sea in ships.

CHAPTER II

Among the Breakers

ORDINARILY, Captain Ichabod Jones enjoyed being crooned to sleep by the weird sounds of the winds as they beat about the corners of his cottage. Now, his mind was filled with a memory of last frantic cries uttered by men, women and children as their clinging hold was loosed from the derelict, the sturdy frame of which he had heard strike on the rocks, as she went to her grave in the sea. Now, he heard the clamors of despair, voiced in the shrieking of the gale. He tossed uneasily upon his bed, offering ever and anon a prayer to the God that rules mad waters to have mercy upon those even then fighting a last grim battle with death.

The first gray gleam of dawn showed a tinge of storm red, radiant and calm above the wildly tossing surges of the sea.

Uncle Icky got out of his bunk, built a fire in the stove and set his coffee to boil. Then, of a sudden, he forgot his preparations for breakfast. His sharp ears had caught the far-away chug-chug of a naphtha-driven craft. He listened, and knew that the boat was making its way toward the Island.

" Well, I'll be blowed," said the Captain to himself—and the rooster. What fool skipper would come down this shore, even on the inside, in such a kick-up as is goin' on? He shore must be plumb daffy, or arter an M.D. for a mighty sick human. I'll try an' hail him as he passes; but the Lord knows he can't pass to the wind'ard o' this-here Island till she ca'ms a heap, an' if he tries to go to lee'ard he'll shore as shootin' take up on the oyster rocks, an' stove her through to her vitals."

Captain Ichabod was right. No land lubber, unacquainted with the dangerous currents and powerful surf breaking over the bar at the Inlet, could pilot a craft safely past the little Island in good weather—let alone the doing of it in this tail-end of a gale. Uncle Icky rushed from the cottage, lantern

in hand. He tried to wave a warning to the foolhardy adventurer who was thus darting down at breakneck speed on the mill-race of the ebb tide to certain destruction.

Captain Ichabod ran with his lantern to the far point of land, and waved it frantically in warning. The wind-driven spray of the surf soaked and chilled him to the bone. But he swung his light in desperate earnestness, though his efforts seemed of no avail, for the launch swept on toward its doom. Ichabod now could see that it was a palatial yacht, of trim build, with a prow that cut the waves like a razor. But, too, he knew that, after rounding the point, the tiny vessel would meet the full fury of the sea, and must be destroyed.

Day broke. In the increased light, the old man cast his lantern aside as useless and swung his arms as a semaphore. The yacht, buffeted by the tumbling seas, swept within hailing distance. Captain Ichabod yelled to the man who was at the tiller to keep her off. In answer, there came three shrill, pitifully wavering blasts of the whistle—a salute that was derisive, the absurd response of a mad-

man. And the man at the wheel waved his hand in pleasant salutation and grinned in a most amiable manner. Captain Ichabod stared aghast. Then, he realized that the man at the helm must be a maniac.

The yacht was in the breakers. The first wave spilled clear over her. Ichabod, watching from the shore, shuddered. He believed her already lost in the coil of waters. But, to the Captain's amazement, the yacht eddied and tossed, dived and floated again. Then, at last, it was swept on the rocks. The hull broke in two under the impact, and the racing waves swept over the wreck.

Out of the ruin of the yacht, the surge bore a mattress, on which rested the seemingly lifeless body of a beautiful young woman. Captain Ichabod saw the strange raft sweep toward the strand. He rushed to seize it, and pulled it beyond the power of the tide to snatch it back into the maw of the ocean. Thereafter, he worked over the girl to save her from death by drowning.

It was a long time before she showed signs of life. But, after a time, the breast began to rise and fall in the perfect rhythm of

health. Captain Ichabod, wild with anxiety, could hear the breathing of this woman whom he had saved from the sea. He was glad. He stood working over her in desperate haste. And then, presently, the lashes of the girl unclosed, and she stared wonderingly into the face of this old man, who stood over her with so much tenderness in his expression.

The girl, suddenly arousing to consciousness, spoke anxiously:

"Doctor, tell me, where am I?"

Ichabod felt himself embarrassed. He spoke emphatically.

"No, Miss, I hain't no doctor—that is, I hain't no medical M.D., but folks says I'm a right smart o' a water doctor fer fever an' sich, but in yo'r case, I's a-takin' o' the water out instead o' puttin' it in or rubbin' it on, an' you lacks a heap o' havin' a fever, but arter I gits ye ter the shack I'll warm up yer little cold frame an' vitals with a swig o' brandy. That is, if ye has come to 'nough ter swaller."

The young woman was now breathing normally. The Captain raised her in his arms and bore her to the shack—across the thresh-

old of which hitherto no woman's foot had stepped. The room was warm with the heat from the cook-stove, which had been left with the drafts open. He laid the girl on his bed, and then brought to her a glass of old brandy, salvaged years before from a wreck, and held intact by him during all this time as if for just such an emergency.

It was with difficulty that he aroused the victim of the wreck sufficiently to swallow the liquor, but in the end he was successful, Then he removed her outer garments, and wrapped her in woolen blankets.

Yet, even after it was plain that the heart was working normally once again, since there was a delicate flush showing in the girl's cheeks, the Captain was puzzled by the mental vagueness. She did not show any revival of intelligence, although she seemed to recover all her physical powers. He came to believe that she must have been injured on the head, by a blow from some bit of wreckage. But, though he went over her skull with deft fingers, he could find no trace of a bruise. He finally decided that her mental condition must be merely the result of the strain under-

gone by her, and that it would be remedied by an interval of sleep. So, he tucked the blankets snugly about her, and then left her alone, that he might see what could be done toward bringing the marooned skipper from his perilous place on the wrecked boat.

While Captain Ichabod was busy with the rescue of the girl, there had come a lull in the storm. The wind had hauled around to the southwest, and was now blowing a stiff breeze off shore, which, taken together with the fast-running tide still on the ebb, had caused the seas to lessen in the Inlet. Under these improved conditions, the Captain decided to make a try at relieving the castaway from his sorry plight.

He launched the red skiff, and set out to row toward the wreck. He was encouraged in the difficult task by the frantic gestures with which the victim of the storm called for succor. Captain Ichabod reflected grimly that this fellow who had disregarded his warnings must be plainly a maniac. Yet he was sufficiently sane to have a normal desire to be saved from death. He guessed that perhaps the yachtsman had been temporarily

unbalanced in his mind when in the grip of the raging waters—then, afterward, had regained his self-control, and with it a wholesome desire to live.

Captain Ichabod managed to bring the skiff up under the lee of the wreck. He threw a rope to the man, and bade him make it fast. The order was obeyed. Ichabod then directed the yachtsman to collect his valuables and come aboard the skiff. The castaway lost no time in obeying. Presently, carrying a small black bag, he seated himself in the skiff, and Ichabod turned the boat's nose toward the shore, and bent to the oars, in haste to get back tc his patient, and so to complete his list of rescues for that eventful day.

During the short interval of time consumed in going from the wreck to the Island, the stranger made anxious inquiries as to the fate of the girl. He had thought that she was dead. When he heard from Captain Ichabod that the girl still lived he was obviously startled and surprised, but, too, he showed every symptom of intense pleasure. He displayed anxiety as to what the girl might

have said. Then, when he learned that she had said nothing at all, he appeared greatly relieved. He seemed pleased to learn that she was still unconscious.

Ichabod, wonderingly, thought that he heard the stranger say:

"Thank God!"

The boat was no sooner beached than the man who had been rescued leaped ashore, still carrying in his hand the small physician's bag. He raced toward the cabin, as if he felt that life or death depended on his haste.

Captain Ichabod suddenly felt very old and worn. He had used too much energy in this work of rescue, and now the reaction set in. He dawdled over the securing of the skiff. Then he made his way with lagging steps toward the cabin. He pushed open the door, and was startled to behold the man he had rescued kneeling beside the couch of the girl. At the noise of the opening door, the man sprang to his feet. . . . Ichabod wondered as he glimpsed an object that shone like silver, and then was slipped cautiously into the man's coat pocket.

Captain Ichabod approached the bed upon

which the girl lay motionless. He noticed on the forearm a tiny drop of blood. He wondered also over this, then solved the puzzle to his satisfaction by thinking that a mosquito had left this trace of its attack. He was confirmed in the opinion by the fact that there was a white blotch beneath the touch of crimson.

Captain Ichabod tried to question the man he had saved, but found every answer baffling and unsatisfactory. The yachtsman refused any sort of information. His reticence angered the old man, and he at last spoke his mind freely, with something of suspicion engendered by a new thought concerning that curious drop of blood on the girl's arm.

"She acts ter me like a woman chuck-er-block with Bateman Drops or opium. A heap o' that kind o' truck is used by the women about these-here islands o' the Sound, an' I've seed a heap o' the effects o' it in the years past, but the good Lord knows it's a spell since Captain Icky has seed a *woman* a-hitten dope, as new-fangled folks calls it."

The man who had been rescued by Ichabod started violently as he heard the word

"dope." He cast a probing glance on the old man, but spoke never a word.

"Thar is one thing fer sartin," continued the fisherman, "if it hain't dope that is a'lin' o' her, it's somethin' that calls fer an M.D., an' if she hain't come to her senses in an hour, I'll put the rag on the skiff an' run up to Beaufort an' bring back Dr. Hudson to pass on the case. Thar has never been a death o' a human in Ichabod Jones' shack, an' Lord have mercy, the first passin' sha'n't be a woman!"

The condition of the girl continued such that Ichabod felt it necessary to summon the physician. He must make the trip in his sailboat to Beaufort, the nearest town along the coast. The yachtsman now approved the idea.

When Captain Ichabod went to make ready his boat for the trip to town, the yachtsman followed him, and then presently, walking down to where the wreckage had come ashore, proceeded to right and clear of débris a little cedar motor boat, which had come ashore from the wrecked yacht, practically unharmed, except that the batteries were wet.

In the absence of Captain Ichabod, the stranger removed all the wire connections in this small boat, and placed the batteries over the stove to dry. When they were in fact thoroughly dried, he waited patiently for the departure of Captain Ichabod in search of a physician. Presently, the old man set out on his errand of mercy. The stranger yachtsman grinned derisively as he saw the boat slip into the smother of storm-tossed waters.

CHAPTER III

A New Calamity

PERHAPS there is no point upon the Carolina coast where there is more interest shown in weather conditions than at Beaufort, the present terminus of the great inland water-route from Boston to the Gulf. There are vital reasons for this. First: a fleet of small fishing vessels makes this their home port. Hardly a family in the town that has not one or more of its members going to sea in the little craft. To be caught off shore in one of the West India hurricanes, which, at irregular intervals, touch this point, means almost certain destruction. Again: there is always danger to the low-lying town from a tidal wave. The town is built on flat ground almost level with the surface of the water. There is no sea wall to keep off the angry waves. The dwellers in the town have learned their danger through

dear experience in times past when the waves have swept over it, bringing desolation and death.

Luckily, the storm that brought the strangers to Captain Ichabod Jones did not blow long enough from the southeast to cause severe damage to the town. Nor was there loss of life at sea. The masters of the fishing boats had seen the weather flags—angry red, with sullen black centers—flying from the signal mast. They had taken warning and remained in port through the time of tempest.

When Uncle Icky rounded the point of marsh land, and headed his skiff for Beaufort, the eyes of the storm-bound fishermen and the other lounging natives gathered at the market wharf quickly espied the familiar patched rag of sail and were filled with wonder as to what could have tempted the old man from his snug Island out into the teeth of the gale. When he sped into the slip, there were many hands ready to grasp the hawser tossed to them by Captain Ichabod, and make it fast to a "punchin."

If the loungers had expected to hear something startling, they were doomed to disap-

pointment. He had no time then to stop and gossip with friends. He hurried on, with an air of unaccustomed self-importance on account of the serious nature of his mission. He was in quest of Dr. Hudson, a great-hearted man, who had spent the best years of his life in ministering to the ills of these fisherfolk. They, in their turn, looked upon him with a feeling of grateful fondness, tinctured with awe—so miraculous to them seemed many of his cures. And, too, they honored him for the manner in which he did his duty toward them. Never a night too black, never a storm too high, for him to fare forth for the relief of suffering. Latterly, however, he had felt the weight of work over much, had felt perhaps as well the burden of advancing years. He had so contrived that a young medical graduate opened up a practise in the neighborhood. He had adroitly used the influence of suggestion so diplomatically that most of the chronic cases—those that took comfort in telling of their maladies, in detailing their symptoms to unwilling listeners—had gladly availed themselves of the new treatment offered by the young physician.

In this way, the old Doctor was spared a tedious and unnecessary routine of labor, yet was left free for such urgent calls as might come to him.

Ichabod found the physician at home, and declared:

"Thar's sick folks at my shack what needs ye an' needs ye bad."

The doctor was aware that Ichabod's sole companion in the shack was the rooster. Knowing also the Captain's fondness for the Dominick, he was inclined to be suspicious that this call for his services was as a veterinary.

"I suppose," he said, "your Shrimp has the pip." Then, of a sudden, he guessed something of the truth. He spoke anxiously. "There hasn't been a wreck, has there?"

"Right ye air, Doctor, there has been a fool shipwreck on my oyster rocks. The captain of the ship an' his mate air at the shack this very minute. He's batty as a toad arter swallerin' shot. An' she's outter her haid—leastways she ain't got sense 'nough left ter talk."

In answer to questions, Ichabod gave a full

narrative of what had occurred, telling all the events in his own quaint fashion, to all of which Doctor Hudson listened with the closest attention.

His comment was crisp.

"It sounds like whisky—more likely, morphia. I reckon it's my duty to go." As a matter of fact, the physician's curiosity had been aroused. He was professionally anxious to get at a solution of the mystery. He hurriedly changed his clothes in preparation for the rough voyage to Ichabod's Island, and equipped himself with the old, worn leather bag stocked with medicines, which, for years, had been a familiar sight throughout the whole region in every household where disease came to terrify and destroy.

"Hurry, Ichabod," the Doctor cried. "We'll shake a leg, or the tide'll be running against us."

Ichabod's skiff was tailed to the physician's little launch. The motor power made the voyage to the Island swift, although it was rough, even to the point of danger on account of the storm-driven waters. When they had made fast at the landing, the two hurried to

the shack. The door was swinging wide. But to their amazement and dismay not even Shrimp was there to give them welcome. The place was utterly deserted. The visitors so strangely cast up from the sea had vanished as mysteriously as they had come. There was the bed on which the girl had been lying —now it was empty. Not even a vestige of her clothing remained to prove that she was more than the figment of a crazed brain. Ichabod stared about him with distended eyes. He could make no guess as to the meaning of the strange thing that had befallen. Then, abruptly, his dazed mind was aroused to a new calamity. . . . Shrimp, too, was gone!

Presently, Ichabod looked for the yacht's tender, and found it likewise gone. He was able to understand in some measure what had occurred. The batteries had been dried by the hot stove in the shack, and—the little craft thus restored to running condition—the man had undoubtedly fled with the girl. And with them Shrimp had voyaged. A sudden overwhelming desolation fell on the old man. He had been through much that

day. He had been strained to the utmost resources of his energies. And he was an old man. He had small reserves of force with which to meet the unexpected. Now, he felt himself bewildered over all the strange happenings. And there was something more. The one constant companion of his lonely life was Shrimp—and Shrimp, too, had fled from him.

The Doctor, very much puzzled over this absence of an expected patient, started to leave the shack. He halted at the head of the steps, and looked down in a bewilderment touched with pity.

For Ichabod was on his knees before the steps of his own house, and his form was shaken with the sobbings of despair.

CHAPTER IV

Under the After Awning

SIDEWALKS along Fifth Avenue were packed with persons of all nationalities, representatives of every variety of industrial activity in the life of the City. There was a reviewing stand erected in front of the massive library that displayed its lines of architectural beauty in place of the sloping, age-gray walls of the old reservoir at Bryant Square. City officials and families of officers in the troops soon to pass were assembled there to witness this march of soldiers on their way to entrain for the Mexican border. They were filled with the zeal of patriots, because their comrades had been foully killed on that same border by a treacherous foe, and they were being sent to avenge that insult against the life and dignity of their nation.

Came the rhythmic beat of feet on the pavement; came the blare of the band. The

two swung together into a harmony of marching. These boys, ordered to the front, were going, steadfastly, as in duty bound. They loved this "send-off." They marched with vigor in their steps, because ten thousand handkerchiefs waved from the windows along the line of march.

On the sidewalks was assembled a strange crowd. There were the stenographers taking their noonday outing. Many were carefully over-powdered and perfumed. They were dressed after the latest fashion—a long way after it!

But the Midinettes were a very small proportion of those wild to see the real soldiers.

All New York had heard the troops were to march that day. And all New York turned out to see the regiments.

There are a myriad phases of metropolitan life. Those phases were illustrated that day in the crowds along the line of march. The bulk of those clustering at the curb were of a sort eager for a free show. In the countless loft buildings bordering the avenue were hordes of men and women too busy in earning a pitiful wage to think of anything so friv-

olous as a procession, with banners waving and bands playing. But while these had no thought of marching troops, there were innumerable others. For New York is a city gigantic. Within it are hosts. Some of these always are idle. Some, always eager for the free show of the streets.

So, to-day, when the troops are to march by with shrill of fife and blatant noise of band, the multitude comes scurrying, curious to see, patriotic with the emotional patriotism of one just become a citizen of a free country, where before he was the unrecognized and unhonored subject of despotism, from which he fled in search of liberty.

New York is a city of millions. It is the biggest city on earth. It is the melting pot of nations. The crowd that lines the curb is of one sort. There is another sort marching the length of the avenue. And this is a mixture to bewilder any beholder. A countryman from New Jersey, with his wife and children comes to-day for this splendid free show of the troops that are to march; the countrymen from the reaches of New York along the Hudson, with the same purpose; his

fellows from Long Island, from Connecticut. With these alien figures, treading the principal city street of the world, are others. Those who walk there daily walk there again to-day. The clubman, coated, hatted, gloved to perfection, takes his accustomed stroll on the avenue, and looks with contemptuous disgust on the crowd that forces him to walk gingerly where usually he struts as a master. He, too, is a patriot and he means to see the march of the troops, and to applaud it—but from his club window, if ever he is able to make his way there through the perspiring congestion of the motley crowd.

There is a crew of money-makers, busy along the avenue on an occasion such as this. These are hordes of itinerant merchants moving up and down with things to sell to the crowd. They offer canes and instruments of noise that by a twist of the wrist make a horrible din. Expecially, they offer American flags—bigger or smaller according to the purchaser's taste and purse. These are bought with eagerness by the crowd, and the fakers reap a harvest from the enthusiasm of those assembled to witness the marching soldiers.

The boy with a box is dominant. Wherever a short, but eager watcher stands to look, the boy comes, with his offer of a box to stand on, a box to sit on, as the purchaser may please, for the nominal cost of ten cents. Always, one finds at hand this boy, with the box that he offers for your sitting or for your feet, as you will. One box bought, he shows another, offering it for sale. Whence he comes with boxes so multitudinous none may guess. But he goes away with nickles and dimes enough perhaps to provide an income that will continue over until another day of parade.

In the reviewing stand, there was seated a girl who watched the marching troops with an intentness that had in it something of desperation, something of despair. Yet, as the soldiers passed, she gave them little heed. She was always looking toward those advancing, as if in search for something that meant more to her than this moving mass of troops.

A band passed. Behind it, at the head of his men, rode Colonel Marion. As he came opposite the reviewing stand, his eyes swept over the crowd seated on the tiers of benches.

They rested on the face of the girl, who had been so anxiously watching. He smiled and saluted. The girl—his daughter Ethel—waved her handkerchief eagerly in response. Then she turned, and spoke to the young man who sat beside her. There was love, touched with reverence, in her voice.

"Isn't Daddy splendid!"

Her companion, Roy Morton, answered with sincerity, in which was a tincture of irrepressible bitterness.

"He's every inch a soldier."

The bitterness came from the fact that a broken tendon—received during his last football fight for Yale—disqualified him for military service, for which he longed more than ever in this hour when he saw the girl beside him so thrilled by the pomp of war, when he saw her pride and exultation in the military bearing of the father she revered. He felt that he must seem a slacker in her eyes, even though she knew that no fault of his own kept him at home, while others marched away to serve their country.

For Roy loved Ethel and his chief desire always was to show perfect in her eyes. For

that matter, he was successful enough, since the girl loved him. Their troth was plighted, and in due time they would be married with the full approval of Colonel Marion, who both liked and respected his prospective son-in-law. So, in preparation for his own absence from home on military service, he strictly charged Roy to watch over Ethel and guard her from any possible peril. It was only a father's instinctive act in protection of his child. As a matter of fact, what danger could by any possibility threaten the well-being of this Ethel, who would remain living quietly in her father's New York house, along with the elderly cousin who acted as chaperon to the motherless girl, and the staff of old and faithful servants?

During the summer weeks that followed the departure of her father, Ethel lived happily enough, content with a routine of life that included entertainments of the usual social sort and especially the almost constant company of her lover.

One of her favorite diversions was a visit to her father's yacht, which lay at its moorings off Eighty-fourth Street in the North

River. There was only a caretaker left on board during the Colonel's absence, but Ethel was fond of spending an afternoon in solitary enjoyment on the yacht. Under the after awning she would sit at ease in the low wicker chair, by turns reading, watching the ceaseless traffic of the river, musing on love and happiness—which meant, always, Roy.

Came a day when Roy was summoned home by the illness of his mother. Ethel went with him to the station and saw him off. It was long after noon when she had given the last word of farewell and the last kiss of tenderness to her lover. Ethel thought that she would like to seek the repose of the yacht for a period of tranquil meditation in the luxurious depths of her favorite chair under the after awning.

She rode to the dock in a taxicab, and the yacht's tender took her to the vessel. It was just then that a great steamer passed, and as she would have mounted the stairs to the yacht's deck an unexpected swell from the passing steamer smote the stairs so violently that Ethel was thrown back into the boat

she had just left, with an ankle crushed under her own weight.

The girl realized that it was badly sprained. She gave orders that she should be carried on board the yacht forthwith. She decided then that she would send home for whatever might be needed—and, too, for the family physician.

With the assistance of the caretaker she managed to reach her cabin, and then sent the fellow to bring the physician in all haste. She pulled off her outer garments and donned a kimono, and crawled into her berth, to await the Doctor's coming.

It was within the hour that the little tender came back toward the yacht, carrying a passenger.

This was Doctor Gifford Garnet, the family physician. He hurried up the companion way, and went at once to his patient's stateroom. A very short examination sufficed. He saw the girl was suffering excruciating pain from the injury to her ankle.

The physician himself was a victim of morphia. And, too, he was a man of imagination—a most dangerous quality in one

of his profession. Now, as he regarded the girl, he realized the intense suffering caused to her by the wrenched tendons in the ankle. That thought of suffering sickened his sensitive nature, so that he felt an emotion almost of nausea from the pain he knew her to be enduring. . . . And he was a coward. Pain had come to him often. Because he was a coward, he had fled from it—interposing morphia as a shield against its attack. So, now, in sympathy for the anguish endured by the girl he turned to the drug to give her relief from suffering. He made an injection into Ethel's arm. . . . The girl watched his movement with listless eyes. Then she sighed and smiled as she felt the gentle sting of the needle. At once she sank into an untroubled sleep.

Dr. Garnet regarded her for a moment with a curiously contemplative stare. Then he grinned grimly, pulled up his coat and shirt-sleeve, and pressed the piston of the hypodermic, driving a heavier charge of the drug into his own blood.

One minute he spent in deft examination of the injured ankle, then bandaged it. After-

ward, he left the girl, and went up on deck. where he stood staring through long minutes toward the fleecy masses of cumulus clouds that lay along the New Jersey horizon.

CHAPTER V

A Prisoner of Morphia

IT was mid-forenoon of the following day when Ethel awoke from the profound sleep superinduced by the drug. It was with a vast astonishment that her startled eyes took in the surroundings of the state-room. There was a blank wall straight opposite her widely gazing eyes, where should have stood a dressing table of Circassian walnut, topped by the long oval mirror always ready to show her the reflected loveliness of her face. And there should have been also lying exposed on the polished surface of the table an orderly and beautiful array of those things that make for a woman's beauty—the creams that cleanse a skin too delicate for the harsh water poured from city mains; in a gold-topped bottle a lotion for the hair, delicate and effective; in dainty phials es-

sences of perfume, subtle, yet curiously pervasive, with the fragrance of joyous springtime. Indeed, a medley of the arts evolved through the ages for the perfecting of that beauty, which, after all, is God-given—a thing not to be attained by the processes of even the most skilled beauty-doctors. . . .

But Ethel possessed the thing itself. To her the accessories were but absurdities—unnecessary and wanton, means whereby to emphasize a natural loveliness.

There should have been a glimmer of pure white light from the back of a hair brush, lying on the dressing table. Ethel had loved the purity of that ivory surface. She had loved it so much that she refused to have it broken by the superimposition upon it of initials wrought cleverly in silver or gold or platinum. That brush meant so much to her! Night by night, she toiled with it. After she had undone the masses of her bronze-gold hair, she worked over them, with a sybaritical, meticulous care.

She was used to sitting in negligée and having her maid brush the strands. That

brushing made the hair resplendent. . . . Now, Ethel looked—there was no dressing table—no mirror—nothing, of the sort that she was accustomed to see when she awoke in the morning.

She thought again of her own bedroom at home. She was minded to take her bath, which must be drawn and waiting. . . . And then, suddenly, that blank wall there before her eyes hammered upon her consciousness.

She was stricken with a curious sense of horror in this instant of realization that she was in some unknown place—absolutely apart from the dear, familiar things of home.

For a few horrid instants that shock of a vague terror pressed upon her like a destroying incubus.

A moment later, recollection thronged upon her. She remembered everything—the coming to the yacht, the fall, the wrenched ankle, the arrival of the physician, the almost dainty pain of the needle thrust into her flesh. And then Ethel began to think that it would be pleasant to be an invalid on board the yacht for a long time. It would need only a judi-

cious selection of guests to make a voyage the most agreeable of diversions.

Just then she was startled into a new emotion. She realized the rhythmic beating of the engines. . . . The yacht was already under way.

For a little, Ethel was too stunned by the shock of surprise to take action. To her, it was inconceivable that the yacht should be thus voyaging. It should be still lying at anchor in the North River. Her father could have given no orders for its sailing. She had not. There was no one else with authority to command the movements of the craft. It should be lying at anchor in its berth. . . . But it was not. There was the pulse from the engines, the gentle swing of the hull to prove that a journey was begun. A journey—whither or wherefore she could not even guess.

Ethel put her feet out of the berth, and winced with pain from the movement of the injured ankle. But she set her teeth in grim determination, and stood up, putting her weight on the sound foot. Then she hobbled to the port, and looked out. She saw the

highlands of New Jersey slipping gently past. She recognized the lightship. There was no longer room for doubt. The yacht had put to sea.

Ethel remained staring out of the port-hole for a long hour, during which the New Jersey coast unrolled a panorama of varied loveliness. And throughout all that hour, the girl was in a maze of wonder over this thing that had befallen. She could make no guess as to the meaning of it all. She found herself dazed by the unexpected situation. Yet, a certain instinct warned her of danger. She did not in the least understand the nature of the peril, the cause of it, the effect. But somehow a subconscious intelligence guided her to the realization that this inexplicable situation was fraught with portents of evil. Her fear sharpened when she found that the door of the stateroom was locked from the outside.

Moving with care that she might not cause herself more pain by strain in the injured ankle, she looked for and found a pencil and a sheet of paper, on which she scribbled a note to her lover.

"Mr. Roy Morton,
"Birchwood Camp,
"Nahassane, N. Y.

"Dearest Roy:

"I fell and injured my ankle and concluded to stay aboard *The Isabel* under the care of Dr. Garnet. I awoke this morning and to my surprise, found the yacht headed down the New Jersey coast. I tried to go on deck. I found I had been locked in my stateroom. . . . Boat still headed south. Come to my rescue!

"I am going to place this note in a face-powder can. I see ahead a fisherman's boat. It is near enough for me to attract its attention. I shall throw the can near the boat, with the hope that the fisherman will open it and find this note. We are heading toward the Delaware Capes.

"Love to you and father,
"Ethel Marion."

She folded the note and scrawled a few words on the outside very hurriedly, for they were now almost abreast the fleet of fishing yawls.

"Mr. Fisherman, I am a prisoner on my own yacht. Please help me and telegraph this letter to Mr. Morton's address." She crammed the bit of paper into the can from which she had emptied the powder. She thrust her head out of the port and uttered a shrill cry to attract the attention of the fisherman. Then she threw the can with all force toward the nearest boat.

Ethel watched in a mood of half hope, half despair. She saw the can fall into the sea. But one of the fishermen also observed the container of her message as it was thrown into the water. Ethel, watching with strained eyes, perceived the figure of a man in oilskins who suddenly thrust a boat-hook overboard, fished with it for a moment, then drew alongside the tin can, bent over, and picked it out of the water. . . . The girl thrilled with relief over the success of her attempt to send news of the trouble come upon her.

Nevertheless, there was, there could be, no immediate effect of the message. The engine of the yacht throbbed steadily, carrying her moment by moment further from home and lover and father and friends, to a destination

unknown—a destination fraught by imagination with unguessed horrors.

Suddenly, Ethel forgot all the difficulties of this strange situation in a realization of the fact that she was hungry—atrociously hungry! It dawned upon her that she had not eaten a single morsel of food since the luncheon of the previous day. She realized then that she was entirely dependent upon her unknown captor, even for food to keep her body alive.

The distraught girl thought of the locked stateroom door, and was made frantic by the fact that she was thus shut in, a prisoner. She stared longingly at the small, round porthole. She regarded that swinging window of heavy plate glass with an anxiety of desire that thrilled through every atom of her blood. She wondered: Could she by any chance thrust her slender body through that narrow aperture? She even went so far as to measure the width of the disc—comparing the space to her own slender breadth of shoulders.

She thought that it might be possible for her to thrust her lithe form through the meager opening. She believed that she could

push her body through the port-hole. She dared to hope that she might thus escape. Down below was the runway used by the sailors. It seemed to her that the matter of escape would be simple.

Her hunger urged Ethel to make the desperate attempt. She was sure that could she once reach the runway she would be safe from detection on the part of the one directing the course of the craft from the pilot-house. She had heard no noise from the galley, which was near her room. She was certain that it was unoccupied, and that she could slip into it unnoticed, there to satisfy her longing for food from the abundant supply of canned goods. Then, after relieving her hunger, she could determine her future conduct. She might decide to act the brave part by showing herself and demanding to know the cause of her confinement; or she might return in the way by which she had come to the stateroom, with a supply of food, and thus await developments.

The distracted girl took a full hour for consideration of the matter. Betimes, she was bold to the point of desperation; be-

times, she was flaccid with despair, helpless before the mysterious horrors of her situation. But at last courage rose in her, became dominant. She resolved to make the attempt at a descent through the opening. Now, she was not in the least intimidated by the very real danger of being unable to secure safe footing upon the narrow runway. The deck below was without a solid rail. It had only the light hand rail with an open space beneath, through which her body might easily plunge into the sea. Moreover, the peril of the exploit was increased for her by the fact of her injured ankle, which must make her footing awkward and unsteady at the best.

Ethel found some comfort on a final examination of the injured ankle. The swelling from the sprain had lessened very perceptibly. She discovered, too, that now she could bend the joint a little without experiencing the excruciating pain which such movement had produced before she lost consciousness from the effect of the opiate. The fact that the injury was not so severe as she had thought and that she could at least depend

upon the hurt member for some support, painful though it might be, heartened her anew. Without further pause for reasonings pro and con, she began to force her body through the opening.

The berth was so located that by placing her sound foot upon the edge of it she was able to thrust the upper part of her body out of the port-hole. But this aid would not serve for the remainder of the progress. To get her hips through, she would have to depend on being able to seize the hand rail and thus pull herself outward and downward. She had no fear of being caught midway and held fast, for her measurements had proved that her shoulders were a trifle broader than her hips. The danger would lie in getting a firm grip with her hands on the rail and in the subsequent swinging down of her body to the tiny width of the runway. Now, as she lunged forward, she held her hands outstretched, as if she were about to dive into the sea. In this moment of stress she thanked God for the strictness with which her father had insisted on athletic training. She knew that her eye was keen and accurate, that her

muscles were strong, ready with instant response to the commands of will.

But, to her dismay, Ethel found that, notwithstanding measurements, her shoulders would not pass through the opening. She writhed in fruitless endeavor until she was exhausted by the strain. Finally, she gave up the attempt and drew back into the cabin, utterly downcast by her failure. Then, when she was somewhat refreshed, she tested the accuracy of her measurements. To her astonishment she found that she had made no mistake. The port-hole was in fact a little wider than her shoulders. For a time she was puzzled by the mystery of it all. Then, suddenly, understanding came to her. She realized that the outstretching of her arms had caused a lifting and consequent broadening of the shoulders. Once again hope filled her. She repeated her attempt, but now with arms dropped close to her sides. She thrilled with delight as her shoulders slid easily through the opening.

Then, in the next instant, the joy vanished. In its place came stark terror. For she found herself held motionless, when half way through

the port-hole, with her arms bound fast by the pressure. She struggled violently, but to no avail. She was caught prisoner with a ruthless firmness that could not be escaped. Her frantic strivings did not budge her body the fraction of an inch either forward or backward. Indeed, it seemed that her futile endeavors to free herself only succeeded in wedging her more securely. She fancied that her own physical violence was causing her body to swell so that it should be gripped more fiercely by the unyielding circumference of the window. There flashed on her a memory of how once she had tried on a friend's ring, had tried it on a finger too large; of how she had pushed it down easily enough over the joint; of how she could not push it back again. She remembered how the finger had swiftly swollen until the ring was deep sunken in the reddened flesh. Now, she imagined her body, caught within the metal rim of the port-hole, was thus reddened and swollen. Her plight filled her with anguish. The dread of it made her forget in this new, overmastering fear all that she had so greatly dreaded hitherto. . . . Her voice broke in a scream:

"Help! Oh, help! Help!"

Almost instantly, as her voice ceased, Ethel heard the sound of hurrying feet on the deck above. She twisted her neck to look upward, and saw the pleasantly smiling face of Doctor Gifford Garnet, as he peered over the hurricane rail. In that moment of relief, the girl welcomed the familiar countenance of the family physician. She had no thought for the cunning smile that answered to her anguished appeal. She realized only that here was one to succor her in her extremity. She called out to him imploringly:

"Oh, Doctor, help me please. I am caught here. My body is swelling, I think. You must get me out at once or I shall die. Oh, hurry!"

The Doctor grinned at her with sardonic enjoyment of her predicament. But his bland words soothed her alarm:

"I come to your rescue with all speed, Miss Ethel. Never fear, little one, you will soon be quite safe. I hasten to relieve your suffering."

He vanished. Then, a few seconds later, she saw him making his way along the run-

way. She did not see the hypodermic syringe he carried in his left hand. She did not understand even when he came to her, and put his two hands to her shoulders as if to help her. She felt the sting of pain in her right arm, but thought it no more than the twinge of a strained muscle. Doctor Garnet deftly slipped the hypodermic syringe into his pocket without the girl's observing it. He spoke to her gently, encouragingly, awaiting the action of the drug. Then, a few moments later, Ethel's lids drooped, her form grew limp, her head lolled to the slight swaying of the yacht. She was held now in a clutch more terrible and more relentless than that of the metal band about her body. She was the hapless prisoner of morphia. Dr. Garnet stared into the face of the unconscious girl for a long half minute, with a curious gloating in his gaze. Then, abruptly, he strode away, and as he went he chuckled softly, with infinite relish over some evil jest known only to himself.

CHAPTER VI

Hunting a Clue

THE Morton camp was not unlike other Adirondack camps owned by the wealthy New Yorker. It consisted of vast acres of wonderful forests, where conifers and hard wood intermingled. Through the tract wandered a pellucid trout stream. At a glance, one would know that those waters were teeming with wonderful trout, that many a big fellow of the finny tribe inhabited the depths that waited for the angler's lure.

The comfortable camp, built of rough-hewn logs with low sloping roof overhanging broad verandas, was built upon a bluff immediately above and overlooking the home of the most elusive, the most splendid speckled beauties—the trout that are the most savory on the table and the gamest in the water.

This morning, Roy Morton was well con-

tent with the world. It was late summer, and something of the languor of the season coursed in his blood. He sat on the porch, watching idly the dimpling waters below in a pool. He had an eager eye for the occasional leap of a trout to the surface in search of prey. He watched appreciatively the glint of rainbow tints on the iridescent sides as the fish rose and the sunlight showed all its splendor. While he gazed, at intervals, Roy worked on his fisherman's tackle. As the trout leaped, he studied that for which they leaped—with an idea of fashioning flies to suit their capricious taste. He finally determined just the fly that he should use for a cast at this hour of the day in order to entice the appetite of the trout. He had that particular fly upon his leader in readiness for a cast, and had started toward the stream to test his judgment in playing on the appetite of a fish, when his attention was distracted by the approach of an ungainly boy, evidently a native.

The boy held in his hand a telegram. Roy dropped his tackle, and held out his hand for the message. Mechanically, he tossed a coin to the lad. Then he ripped open the envelope

and read the message. . . . And he read there Ethel's frantic appeal for help.

Roy was equally amazed and alarmed as he read and its meaning penetrated his brain. Usually, he was a young man distinguished for his coolness, resourcefulness and courage. Now, however, for the time being his brain was dazed; his heart leaped with fear. Through long minutes he stood motionless, staring with unseeing eyes, as if striving in vain to penetrate the veil of this terrible mystery that hung between him and the girl he loved. His thoughts were a miserable whirl of confusion; his will was powerless to marshal them in order. He did not note the going of the messenger boy, who sauntered casually back over the way he had come, whistling in happy unconsciousness as to the suffering of which he had been the harbinger.

Then, presently, Roy's mind cleared; his heart grew brave again; he felt a frantic desire for instant action. He looked about for the messenger boy, and uttered an exclamation of anger as he saw that the fellow was gone. He was desirous of sending on that very instant a telegram to the police authori-

ties in New York, asking them to begin an investigation at once. He shouted for the boy, but there was no answer, and he realized that the messenger was gone beyond recall.

Roy wheeled, and rushed into the house. He ordered a horse saddled, and within five minutes was galloping at breakneck speed for the station. He knew that the next regular train was not due for three hours, but he had decided without any hesitation that he would order a special. He felt that no haste could equal the necessity now when Ethel was momently being carried further and further away from him, when perhaps her life, her honor, were imperilled by the scoundrels who had her in their keeping.

On his arrival at the station, Roy issued his orders with a crisp air of authority that won instant obedience from the man who served as station master and telegraph operator. The telegraph key sounded busily for a few minutes, and the matter was arranged. A special would be ready for him within an hour. This would get him to Albany in time to make connection with the limited express for New York.

That accomplished, Roy cantered leisurely back to the camp. As he rode, his mind was concentrated on plans for his future course. He resolved to keep the matter secret from his elderly mother, who was by no means in good health. Instead, he would merely tell her that a friend of his was in trouble, and that he must go immediately to New York, in order to straighten out the affair. His mother accepted his explanation without any suspicion that he had told her only a half-truth. She merely mourned over this interruption of his visit, and made him promise to return at the earliest possible moment. Roy felt shame over the subterfuge with which he had deceived his mother, but he knew that it was necessary for her own sake, while her knowledge of Ethel's plight could do no good.

Roy hastily, but methodically, packed his traveling bag, and then, after an affectionate farewell to his mother, stepped into the town wagon, and was driven to the station.

After reaching the station, Roy occupied the short interval of waiting for the special by writing out two messages, which he had put on the wire to New York. The first of these

was addressed to the Collector of the Port, asking whether or not clearance papers had been taken out for *The Isabel.* The other telegram was to the most noted detective agency in the city, which contained a request that their best operative should meet him at the arrival of his train in the Grand Central Terminal. He directed that the replies, in each instance, should be sent to him at Albany, in care of the limited train with which he would make connection there.

The second message was barely completed and delivered to the telegrapher when the special roared to a standstill by the station platform. Roy sprang quickly up the steps, and almost before he had entered the car the locomotive was again snorting on its way.

The loungers about the station watched greedily this unexpected interruption of the day's routine. And, too, there was bitter envy in their hearts directed toward this handsome, young aristocrat, who could thus summon a train for his private pleasure. They could not guess anything of the black misery that marked the mood of the young man whom they deemed so favored of fate.

Roy's impatience was such that he could not sit for a minute at a time. Instead, he strode to and fro with the feverish intensity of a leopard padding swiftly backward and forward in its cage. So he moved restlessly, though walking in the car was none too easy. There was need of haste if the special would catch the limited express at Albany. It was evident that the engineer and fireman had no mind to fail in the task set for them. The fireman gave steam a plenty, and the engineer made use of it with seemingly reckless prodigality. The car swayed and leaped with the excessive speed. On the curves, sometimes, it appeared as if it must be thrown off the track, and Roy was compelled to cling fast to his seat in order to avoid falling. But he felt no distress over the rocking, lurching progress. Rather, he found a grim joy in it, since it was haste, and always more haste, for which he longed. . . . And then, at last, the special thundered into the Albany station and clanged to a standstill. Roy breathed a sigh of relief. The limited express had not yet pulled in.

He had time to make inquiry concerning

telegrams, and found one awaiting him from the Collector of the Port of New York. This simply stated that no papers had been issued for the clearing of the yacht *Isabel.* The message added that if the vessel had sailed it must have been stolen. Just as he finished the reading of this dispatch, the operator handed him a second telegram—one from the detective agency. It announced that their best operative would meet him in the terminal at the gate on the arrival of the limited express in New York. There was a direction added to the effect that the operative might be recognized by his standing apart from the crowd and wearing two white carnations in the lapel of his coat.

Arriving at the Grand Central terminal, Roy walked rapidly to the exit gate. His eyes roamed for a moment over the passing throng in search of the man with the boutonnière of white carnations, and presently picked him out where he stood a little apart. Roy hurried to him, and made himself known. At once then the two men left the station and crossed over to the Biltmore, where they took seats in the lobby for a conference.

Jack Scott, the detective, had won fame for his agency by his masterly work in solving the problems of many skilful jewel robberies among the wealthy residents of the metropolis. He yet lacked some years of thirty, but his reputation was already of the highest among those who knew what his occupation was. For, as a matter of fact, the young man was of old Knickerbocker stock, and the inheritor of wealth. He had a genius for detective work and a love of the calling that compelled him to make it his vocation. But his employment in this wise was known only to the head of the agency with which he had associated himself, and to a few trusted intimates. The better to guard his secret he adopted the plebeian alias of Jack Scott for professional purposes instead of his own aristocratic name.

He had first won the admiring attention of the detective agency's chief by an exploit when he was only eighteen years of age. At that time his mother was robbed of a fabulously valuable pearl necklace. Extraordinary rewards were offered for its recovery, and detectives big and small hunted high and low for the gems. They failed utterly in their

search. But the lad worked out a theory as to the theft, gained evidence to prove it the truth—in short, within a fortnight, he had recovered the pearls, and the thieves were safely lodged in jail.

Already at this early age, the boy was profoundly interested in uplift work among criminals. When his mother smilingly turned over to him the reward she had offered for the recovery of her necklace, he devoted the whole sum to this charitable work. And ever since he had made a like disposal of the proceeds from his professional services. Now, Roy recognized in the detective assigned to him by the agency, an acquaintance of his own, Arthur Van Dusen. He expressed his astonishment at this revelation concerning one whom he had regarded merely as a social butterfly. But explanations were soon made, and Roy could not doubt Van Dusen's ability since it was guaranteed by the agency.

He immediately made known his need of help.

"I'm afraid," he began with a tremor of anxiety in his voice, "that you have been assigned to a case which will prove hard to

solve. The woman I love—the woman I had expected to marry soon—has been taken from me in a most mysterious way. Somehow she's been kidnapped, and taken to sea a prisoner on her father's yacht."

"Her name?" Van Dusen demanded crisply as the speaker paused.

"It's Ethel Marion," Roy answered huskily. "The daughter of Colonel Stephen Marion, who, at present, is with his regiment on the Mexican Border." He drew Ethel's message from his pocket and extended it to the detective.

"The only clue I have," he continued, "is this letter from her. She managed somehow to toss it near enough to a fisherman's dory so that they picked it up, and forwarded it to my mother's camp in the Adirondacks. I wired the Collector of the Port for information about the yacht's clearance papers. I had a reply from him at Albany on the way down here. He said that the yacht has not been cleared, and that if it's not in port, it has been stolen."

Roy fairly groaned, and made a gesture of despair.

"That's all I know of the affair," he added drearily. "I am distracted for fear something dreadful may have happened already. You understand now how badly I require your help. I can think of nothing—do nothing. You are not to think of expense. Just rescue Ethel Marion and run down and jail those guilty of this crime against her." His voice suddenly became pleading. "And you must let me enlist as a lieutenant to serve under you. Inactivity under such stress would drive me mad, I know. I was stunned at first, but now I have my faculties again, and I believe that I may be able to be of use in the case under your guidance."

Van Dusen stretched out his hand and clasped that of Roy warmly. Something in the firm contact comforted the distraught lover. It was as if strength and courage flowed into him from the other man.

"Rely upon me," Van Dusen said quietly, but with a note of confidence in his voice that still further served to hearten his hearer. "And I shall certainly make use of you—and at once. First off, I'll ask you to get in touch immediately with Captain Halstead, the mas-

ter of my yacht. Arrange to have it properly equipped and provisioned, so that we may sail at a moment's notice. Luckily," he added musingly to himself, "the new wireless outfit is already installed on *The Hialdo*. We'll need it."

Van Dusen stood up abruptly, and again spoke to Roy, almost curtly.

"After you've attended to the matter of the yacht, report to me at the agency. You should be there well within an hour. If you arrive first, wait for me."

"But you——?" Roy began eagerly.

Van Dusen replied to the unfinished question.

"I'm off now to seek a clue from Miss Marion's maid." His voice grew gentle as he spoke again after a moment's silence. "It's a curious case; curious and—difficult. But, please God, we'll win."

Roy's answer came brokenly.

"Heaven bless you, Van Dusen! And," he added with fierce intensity, "we will win —we must!"

CHAPTER VII

Stormbound

VAN DUSEN hurried to the Marion address, where he found Ethel's maid thoroughly enjoying the vacation that had resulted for her from Doctor Garnet's action. Using his alias of Jack Scott, Van Dusen explained to the girl the situation that had developed, which was so perilous to her young mistress. When the maid had recovered from her first dismay, she told freely all that she knew, and this was sufficient easily to give Van Dusen the suspicion that the family physician might be in fact the guilty man, who was responsible for Ethel's disappearance.

The detective's next visit was to the office of Doctor Garnet. There he found the physician's secretary much worried over the prolonged and unexplained absence of his employer. He declared that the last time he

had seen Doctor Garnet was several days before when he had left in answer to a hurry call from the victim of an accident. The secretary added that he had made careful inquiries in every possible direction, but had been unable to find any trace whatsoever of the missing man.

Van Dusen gave only vague answers to the anxious questions put by the secretary. He stated merely that a client of his was anxious to get in touch with the physician. Then, without more ado, he hastened to keep his appointment with Roy. His own face, now he was alone without any necessity for the mask of indifference, was deeply perturbed. Consternation was written in his expression. His deductions brought him face to face with the fact that Garnet was actively concerned in the mystery. Either the physician was actually guilty of abducting his girl patient for some evil purpose of his own, or else he himself was also a victim of the kidnappers along with Ethel. Or, finally, the man had suddenly become deranged from nerve strain and overwork, and in this irresponsible condition had stolen away the girl, with what

crazy design none might guess. This possibility was even more dreadful than the others since there could be no certainty as to what the madman might intend. Van Dusen realized, with a shudder of horror, that in haste must lie the only chance of rescuing the girl from some horrible fate. It seemed to him that the single feasible plan would be to follow down the coast according to the directions given in Ethel's letter to Roy. While doing this the wireless on his yacht would keep constantly in touch with all Southern ports and with the coastwise steamers for news of *The Isabel*. Then whenever the stolen yacht should be located, if fortune so favored, it would be pursued with all speed in the hope of effecting a rescue.

Van Dusen found Roy pacing uneasily to and fro in an outer room at the agency. He had performed the duties entrusted to him by the detective and was now wild with impatience for further action. His first glance into Van Dusen's face stirred him to new excitement.

"Oh, Arthur!" he exclaimed, "I can see by your expression that you have obtained im-

portant information. Tell me!" he insisted. "Tell me! I must know—even if it's the worst. In these hours of suspense and despair, I've braced myself to stand any shock. Tell me!"

Van Dusen answered soothingly.

"Roy, old man, the mystery will be solved, I think, and that before long. That is to say, it will be cleared up unless *The Isabel* founders at sea before we can reach it. I have discovered that in all human probability Miss Marion has been carried away in the yacht by Doctor Garnet."

"Are you positive about that?" Roy demanded fiercely.

"I am positive this far," came the quiet reply. "Doctor Garnet has not returned to his office since the time when he answered the call to attend Miss Marion on the yacht. It is fairly to be deduced from her message to you that he appeared on board in answer to her summons. I am of the opinion that Doctor Garnet is the one responsible for this outrage. He is either the victim of a sudden fit of insanity, or he has become a man-beast, sacrificing position and honor and every decent instinct in order to gratify a heretofore smol-

dering lust, which has suddenly flamed forth and got beyond his control."

"Your deductings are doubtless right—at least in part," Roy admitted, though with obvious reluctance in his tone. "But I find it hard to believe the possibility of Doctor Garnet's being the brute you suggest. He is universally esteemed not only for his ability, but also for his manliness and his many deeds of kindness and charity. If he has done this thing it must have been as you also suggest because he has gone crazy."

Roy mused for a moment, and then spoke with a new note of excitement in his voice.

"How do we know that the Doctor was not murdered while on board the yacht, and that the murderer or murderers then made off with the vessel and Marion? Or, perhaps, the tender was capsized and he was drowned along with the caretaker. Afterward the kidnapping may have been done by others who knew nothing whatever of Doctor Garnet." Roy shook his head with decision. "Anyhow," he added, "I cannot believe that Doctor Garnet, in his right mind, could ever have been guilty of such a foul crime."

Van Dusen regarded the young man tolerantly, but his smile was a little cynical as he replied:

"When you have studied crime as thoroughly as I have during the past few years, Roy, you will not be so confident of finding nothing but good in any particular man, no matter how high his reputation may be. I cannot say with certainty that Doctor Garnet is vile; neither can I say that he is incapable of vileness. But in the work I have to do, I must entertain all possibilities if I would solve the problem."

"Well, Arthur," came Roy's reply after a moment of reflection, "I admit that I am amazed by what you have told me. I do not in the least understand the turn of affairs by which Doctor Garnet is implicated. But you are in charge of the case, and I am absolutely in your hands. I mean not to hamper you in any way—not even by throwing doubts on your judgment. So, now, just tell me what you mean to do next."

Van Dusen answered authoritatively:

"We must leave at once. On my way here, I sent out wires to Norfolk and other nearby

coast points. These will be sufficient to keep the port officers on the lookout for *The Isabel*, as well as the coast-guard crews. I have a wardrobe on board my yacht. Whatever you may need beyond what's in your bag, I can supply you with. Let's be off."

Van Dusen's yacht was moored near the spot where *The Isabel* had been lying. The detective made diligent inquiry at the landing stage in the hope of picking up some bit of information concerning Doctor Garnet's presence there, but the effort was fruitless. No one seemed to have known anything concerning the physician's visit.

Forthwith, then, the two young men went aboard Van Dusen's yacht, and a few minutes later the vessel was under way, with instructions to the master to hug the New Jersey shore while keeping a sharp lookout for *The Isabel.*

The detective operated his own wireless outfit and for several hours at the outset of the voyage he kept busy, interrogating the different ships bound up and down the coast, and the shore stations as well, for any information concerning the stolen yacht. Finally,

a tramp steamer answered that she had passed *The Isabel* the day before, and that the yacht at that time was headed down the coast, going slowly, in the direction of Hampton Roads. At once, on receiving this news, Van Dusen directed that the yacht's course should be set for Cape Charles and the Roads.

As a matter of fact, without this information, the yacht must have taken this same direction for the sake of safety, since the weather soon became so threatening that none but the most foolhardy would have ventured to navigate in the open sea a vessel of *The Hialdo* type.

The Hialdo pushed her nose through the waters of Hampton Roads in the early morning. Both Roy and Van Dusen were on the bridge, surveying with their glasses every detail visible of the bays and creeks. They dared hope to catch somewhere a glimpse of *The Isabel*, for they believed that she must be secreted somewhere hereabouts in some out-of-the-way place. They were justified in this by the fact that they had received no word of the yacht's arrival from the harbor

authorities of Norfolk. Yet, now, their roving scrutiny was of no avail. Nowhere could they find a trace of aught that could possibly be mistaken for *The Isabel*. . . . With the approach of night the violence of the gale became such that perforce Van Dusen gave orders for the tying up of the *The Hialdo* at the Norfolk port, there to await the passing of this southeaster of hurricane force.

The hours during which the tempest raged were fraught with horror for Roy Morton. He was in despair now, for he could not believe that *The Isabel* would be able to ride out the gale. His imagination pictured for him with frightful vividness the wreck of the yacht and its carrying down to death the girl he loved. The young man's agony of spirit was so evident that Van Dusen became alarmed lest he should break down. The detective thought to distract Roy from his morbid thoughts by suggesting that they take a trip into the town to lessen the tedium of waiting until the storm should wear itself out. His persistence at last won a reluctant consent, and the two set forth. . . . In after

years, Roy was to think often with shuddering of what must have been the dreadful result, had he indeed refused to accompany the detective on that excursion into the town.

CHAPTER VIII

The Efficiency of Clam Broth

THE mere act of rapid walking had a beneficial effect upon Roy. His circulation was equalized by the exercise and something of his natural buoyancy of spirit was restored to him. The detective, too, found pleasure in the tramp, and the young men walked along many miles of the Norfolk streets, aimless, but well entertained. They swung at last into the square where a huge monument commemorates the Lost Cause and heroic dead. Suddenly Van Dusen's attention was attracted to a huge gilt sign over the door of a saloon. The outer aspect of the place was attractive enough, with something of distinctiveness about it. He turned to Roy and spoke with a tone of amused interest.

"That seems a bit different from other saloons. And I fancy the sign tells the truth."

With the words, he pointed to the gilt lettering over the door.

Roy turned and looked in the direction of the detective's pointing finger. "Clam Broth King," he read, and smiled appreciatively.

"Well, old man," he remarked, "it's a straightforward way of advertising a food, as well as a novel one. And from the labels on the bottles in the window, it might prove a good place for us to visit before we start on the return journey to the yacht.

"I really know the place," Van Dusen declared, "and it is excellent. About a year ago, I was in this city on an important case. It was through the assistance of The King that I was able to locate a most valuable witness. And the probability is that but for the sign I would have missed it. I've always been a perfect fiend for clam broth. After seeing the sign, I knew, of course, there must be something particular in that line inside, and so I wandered in. Well, I was served by The King. When I first entered, I reconnoitered by stepping up to the bar and ordering a drink. Before I had a chance to question the man who was serving me, a

gentlemanly appearing fellow touched me on the arm, and asked me pleasantly if I wouldn't like a cup of clam broth. He said that The King had just made a fresh batch, and that it was fine. I scrutinized the fellow closely. He had a kindly, youthful face, and his bearing was agreeable. I answered him promptly that good clam broth was just what I wished to have. 'But,' I demanded, 'who the devil is The King? It's a new one on me, to have a king for a chef.'

"The man laughed and then replied:

"'Oh, The King! Why, he's only *me*!'

"To cut it short, a few minutes later the broth was served to me, along with some dainty wafers, and while I drank it The King and I made friends."

Van Dusen's tone changed abruptly.

"But let's not loiter here on the outside any longer. Let us go into the presence of The King."

So it came about that Roy was duly presented to The King, and he was not disappointed in either that culinary monarch or the throne room. Perhaps his enthusiasm was the greater since he was sorely in need of

food to nourish a mind and body exhausted by suffering.

The clam-broth King catered largely to the officers of ocean-going vessels. There's hardly a master sailing the main who has touched at Norfolk or anchored in Hampton Roads during recent years that has not known Harry the clam-broth King, and has called him friend. To-day the usual number of storm-bound seafaring men of the better class were gathered around the miniature tables in the place. The King was very busy indeed, passing from group to group to see that none of his friends were neglected. He greeted Van Dusen with obvious pleasure and had a welcoming smile for the newcomer when he was introduced to Roy. A moment later Van Dusen and Roy were seated at one of the tables, each with a bowl of piping-hot clam broth before him.

But before the contents of the bowls had been wholly swallowed both Roy and the detective paused to listen with avid interest to the words of a mariner seated at an adjoining table. And this is what they heard:

"Yes, boys, it was some blow and believe

me it is still a-kicking up good and plenty outside the Capes. I missed the worst of it. My barometer had indicated that there was going to be some big doings long before the clouds begun to loom. I was half a mind to haul to in the hook o' the Cape at Lookout, but the sky seemed so clear and I was so near Hatteras that I made up my mind that we could get into the Roads by crowding the boilers a little. I'd a heap rather be laying up close to the King's clam broth than at that sorry, lonely, Lookout Bight. Don't understand me that I have got anything against that snug little harbor. I have every reason in the world not to have for she has saved my vessel and my carcass many's the time. The only thing is that it is such a desert place on land, not a house, not a human, with the exception of the light-keeper and his crew. When a skipper makes harbor he likes it to be where there are some shore pleasures on tap. I will venture that there was not less than half a dozen skippers put in there to get away from this blow and every last one whilst they knew the fact of that little nook o' safety being there had

saved him and his ship, was just a-raring because he had not taken a chance rounding Hatteras and putting into Hampton Roads where he could run in here and gossip and inhale the fumes of King Harry's clam broth and feel the effects of his Scotch, while this-here West India hurricane wore herself out.

"You know, boys, I wish that I was a yachtsman with a good roll to back it up. Why, do you know them fellers take lots of chances and it's very seldom that they lose their craft? Of course, I have navigated over more of the sea than you, having been coasters all your lives. And do you know there is hardly a port in the world where I haven't seen a pretty, trim American yacht lying at anchor or haven't passed them on the seven seas? And never have I found one in great distress—except for being out o' some particular kind of liquor. With we fellers it's different. We're always in some kind o' trouble, not to mention being constantly out o' all kinds o' liquors. And then we are scairt o' our lives, or run aground or burn up, and so lose our master's papers, which means our job."

The speaker paused to clear his throat noisily. Then he went on:

"Speaking along these lines reminds me of a little yacht we passed on the run up, off Ocracoke Inlet. She was a long ways off shore, headed in. But I guess she made the inside all right in spite of the waves running high and breaking and the strength of the wind increasing with every flaw. Her name was *The Isabel.* And it's my opinion the captain of that yacht ought to be in the crazy house or dead."

Somehow at the outset, the narrative had riveted the attention of Roy and Van Dusen. It was as if their intuitions warned them that something significant was to issue from the mariner's rambling remarks. The utterance of the yacht's name thrilled them both, and they stared at each other for a moment with startled eyes. Then they listened again with new intentness as the speaker continued his account:

"It was just after daylight. I had been on the bridge all through the night, for I was anxious over our position, should the hurricane break with full force. I knew from the

glass that it was close on us. I was looking dead ahead. Suddenly out of the mist appeared a craft as white and trim as a swan. She would plunge forward on a giant wave, then disappear for a moment in the trough, to appear again right side up, and coming at full speed to meet the next one. She was driving so fast that often she would force herself through, rather than over, the oncoming waves. I just naturally kept expecting from second to second that that fool skipper, sending her along at such reckless speed, would bury her so deep that it would be impossible for her to shake off the tons of brine, and so float on top again. If the fool only had sense enough to slow her down, I thought to myself, that bit of a craft would almost go through hell itself without a scorch. I realized that we were getting dangerously close, for I was going fast before the wind. So I quickly gave a passing-signal blast from our whistle, indicating that we would pass her on the port side. What do you suppose that fool at the wheel did then? Close as we were, and with no other reason that I could guess other than a desire to court death, he deliberately an-

swered my signal with two blasts. They meant that he was going to starboard, almost diagonally across our bow. I saw it was too late to correct his error, so I simply had to accept his cross signal, and I did my best to avoid a collision. I was successful—no thanks to him. We missed *The Isabel* by a hair. As it was, I thought that in spite of all we could do the suction from our propellers would draw in and crush the smaller boat against our side. I fancy we missed it more through good luck and the grace of God than through good management. And now what do you think?

"That chap at the wheel, instead of appearing grateful and giving me three blasts in salute, stuck his head and shoulders out of the pilot-house window and shook his fist at me. He yelled, too, and the wind brought the words down to me. 'You're only a dirty tramp, but you think you own the seas!' You boys know that that word 'tramp' for a good honest trading steamer always did get on my nerves. I admit I swore a little at the bunglesome cuss, but he was well to windward, so I might just as well have saved my breath.

"I honestly believe that that ornery fellow

in the pilot house was crazy as a bed-bug. Stranger still, there wasn't another soul in sight aboard of her. I'm thinking I'll report the affair to the inspectors. There's no doubt in my mind that *The Isabel* weathered the storm for the chap was headin' her straight as he could go for Ocracoke Inlet. As the yacht was of light draft she could easily get over the bar and into Pamlico Sound, where he could haul to under the lea of the sand dunes. Down there that craft would ride out 'most anything that might come along."

The detective, with a gesture to Roy that he should remain in his seat, arose and crossed over to the Captain of the tramp steamer. He called the man aside, and frankly explained how he had overheard the narrative concerning the yacht *Isabel.* He admitted that this information was of vital importance to his friend and himself.

The Captain at once became intently interested. Doubtless he foresaw something in store for the yachtsman that would settle his own score against the fellow, the fellow who had reviled him.

"If you really want to come up with that

critter," the mariner declared, "it would be the easiest thing in the world according to my mind, provided you have the right sort of a boat."

Van Dusen described his yacht.

"How much does this *Hialdo* of yours draw?" the swarthy-faced skipper demanded.

"She draws, fully stocked, just eight and a half feet aft," the detective answered. "And we could shift the gasoline so that she would get through on eight feet of water."

The captain nodded appreciatively.

"That fellow, the chances are, is right this minute at anchor somewhere in Pamlico Sound, or else he's cruising around on some of those connecting inland waters. The one and only place where he could get to sea again would be where he went in at Ocracoke, or else at Beaufort Inlet—though he might head for Norfolk by way of one of the two canal routes. You can bet your bottom dollar that, even as crazy as he is, he won't tackle the open sea just yet while this heavy swell is still on. It's my idea you got your man sure enough, for he's in a trap. The thing for you to do is to get aboard your craft,

and then hot-foot it through the Dismal Swamp Canal for Ocracoke by way of Albemarle, Coratan and Pamlico Sounds.

"If you like," the Captain added with a touch of embarrassment lest he might seem officious, "I'll keep a sharp lookout on the other canal, so that he can't pass you while you're going through old Dismal. You might post the authorities at Elizabeth City to keep an eye open for the yacht, and to detain her if she shows up while you're rushing on at full speed for Ocracoke and Portsmouth. They're the little towns, one on each side of the Inlet. If you don't happen to find the outfit at either of these places, there ain't a particle of doubt according to my judgment that those folks can inform you of the direction taken by *The Isabel* when she sailed, for they keep mighty close tabs on every vessel that comes or goes through the Inlet. If you find she headed south on the inside, you'll know that loony is making for Beaufort Harbor with the idea of waiting there for the sea to calm down before venturing on the outside. Or maybe he hasn't any intention of going out at all. It seems to me he's more likely to be heading

for some one of those tributaries to the Sound that are narrow and deep, with the shores covered by a regular jungle growth. Boats of any size seldom go into them—except once in a while one run by a drag-net fisherman. This crazy man could expect to hide there for weeks on a stretch without danger of being disturbed. If it's actually a case of kidnapping he's certainly shown himself as cunning as mad folks sometimes are."

The detective motioned to Roy to join him and the Captain. Then in a few crisp words he explained the situation as it was indicated by the mariner. Both he and Roy joined in expression of gratitude to the skipper, who gave his name as Jake White. Then the two, realizing the need of haste, said farewell, and made their way back to the wharf with what speed they might.

CHAPTER IX

Once in a Lifetime

TO the average humane person the loss of a pet, whether through thievery or death itself, brings a very real sorrow for a time. How much worse it must be for one who lives alone, a recluse on an island of sand in the sea, to suffer the loss of his only living companion, something to come at his beck and call, something that seems indeed to reciprocate its master's affection!

It is true that Shrimp was only a fowl—a Dominick rooster at that. Probably, from the standpoint of intelligence, a creature very low in the scale. But its association in this case had developed the qualities of the bird. The years of companionship had brought man and rooster to an intimate understanding of each other.

When Captain Ichabod stepped from his shack, his pocket bulging with corn for his favorite, and saw the rooster showing afar off against the snow-white sand where he was industriously scratching, and whistled a summoning call, Shrimp would come racing toward him at top speed, with wings beating a rhythm to his hurrying legs. Then would the rooster greedily pick the grain of corn from his master's horny palm, clucking the while guttural notes of gratitude. And at such moments Ichabod's heart would grow warm with pleasure in the realization that it was within his power thus to make one of God's creatures happy.

When Doctor Hudson came to the door of the shack, where the bereft old fisherman sat, shaken with sorrow over his loss, he tenderly smoothed the Captain's wrinkled brow. He asked to know the cause of this sudden misery.

Ichabod, with a boylike gesture, brushed away the tears from his eyes with the back of his hand. Then he straightened himself, and met the physician's kindly gaze squarely.

"Thar ain't no call for explanations when a feller's feelin's are teched. Doc, do ye know o' some lonely codger that needs a good housekeeper?"

The earnest question came in such startling contrast to the old man's manner of a moment before, when he was shaken with sobs, that the Doctor was hard put to it to restrain a burst of laughter. But by a great effort he limited his expression of amusement to a broad smile as he replied:

"Yes, I know one—an old retired fisherman by the name of Jones, Captain Ichabod Jones. He's a man who has weathered many of the storms of life. Now, as his bark is getting nearer to the last port, he needs to be less alone." A note of very sincere sympathy had crept into the physician's voice. "He should no longer be troubled with the cares of looking after his own home. But, I suppose, there's no use mentioning this to the man himself."

"Yo'r in the right church, Doc," replied the fisherman, "but ye are approachin' the wrong pew. Ichabod Jones has proved himself this day. I did 'low that I was gettin'

sort o' decrepit like, but this mornin' proved to me that I ain't as near all in as me and my friends thought. Didn't I tote a human woman nigh onto a quarter of a mile without a-hurtin' me a mite? No, sir, Doctor, I am the man that wants the job. Them scoundrels that I saved has stole all that I had in the world to come home to and now I'm ready to quit this island o' mine an' go an' dust out an' cook vituals for some crabbid old customer that is meaner than me. The more he'd quarrel the more it 'ould suit fer it 'ould take my mind off of this woman business that took place here to-day, and then I might larn to forgit the rooster."

"Jones, I believe you're crazy!" The Doctor exclaimed half angrily. Then he added, with a grin: "I guess I'd better give you a sedative to quiet those overwrought nerves of yours. Then you can get inside the shack, lie down on your bunk and doze off for a spell."

The old fisherman took the remark with all seriousness. His face grew livid as he stared at the Doctor with widened eyes. He

stretched to his full height and spoke in a tone of tense solemnity.

"I will have you to know, Doctor Hudson, that never again will Ichabod Jones occupy that bunk, for—God A'mighty, man!—it has been desecrated by a woman. Of course, it was my own fault, I suppose. But then there was death a-starin', an' what could I do? When I built that hut an' tossed the fust blankets on that bunk I swore by the power that rules the waters what washes over this sand-bank o' mine that no woman should ever be welcome. An', by the Eternal, I meant it! They may say that Icky Jones has quar notions, and like enough he has, but when that woman what I loved saw fit to take on the beach-comber o' Port Smith Town, an' left me to be the laughin' stock o' Cartaret County, I sure as shootin' made up my mind that it couldn't happen but once in my lifetime—an' it hain't—an' it won't! An' say, Doc, when that foreign woman, whilst I was a-bringin' her to, opened up them pretty eyes an' looked at me fer the fust time, I made up my mind or rather dis-

kivered, that old as I be an' quar as I be, I can't trust myself agin whar thar's women. Sure as thar's clams and oysters on them rocks yonder, I'd play fool, an' try an' make it heigh-ho for the parson. You see, Doc, it ain't that I hate women that I located on this lonely island. It's because, by golly, I'm afeared of 'em."

This was the first time, so far as the physician knew, that Ichabod had ever thus frankly confessed the truth concerning his bitter marital experience and its effect on his life. Doctor Hudson was deeply impressed by the fisherman's display of emotion. He spoke seriously in reply:

"Captain, you can't imagine how glad I am to have heard you say this. Until now, I never could understand how a man of your honest character and kind heart could hate the sex to which we owe our being, the sex that has done so much to make life more beautiful, to make happiness for humanity. Now, at last, I understand. Your seeming hatred has been merely a mask for cowardice. You'd fight a giant, if need be—just as you have

fought that giant, the sea, so often and so bravely. But, just the same, you're an arrant coward. You turn tail and run when a woman's in question, because you're afraid of the weaker sex. I suspect it's time for you to reform. I want you to come to town with me now, and stay there until you've fully recovered from to-day's excitement. While you're there, I'll look round and see what I can do toward finding you a place as housekeeper."

Ichabod shook his head with great emphasis.

"No, sir, Doc," he declared sturdily, "I ain't a-goin' to stir a step fer the town. But I'll let ye tow me as far as the Spar Channel. Then I'll set sail fer the coast-guard station. I'll spin my yarn thar to the boys, an' like's not spend the night with 'em. Then I reckon I'll come back to the Island. But, fust off, I'll stop at your office an' git some fumigatin' powders, so's to fix the house fit fer Ichabod again."

The Captain and the physician made some further examination, which convinced them that the strangers had in fact left the Island by means of the wrecked yacht's little tender.

Assured of this, the two men set forth, the Doctor for Beaufort, Ichabod to pay his visit at the life-saving station near old Fort Macon, where he knew that he was sure of a royal welcome.

CHAPTER X

Eyes from the Deep

THE staid little city of Beaufort had been stirred to its remotest corners with the exciting news brought back from Ichabod's Island by the physician. Doctor Hudson had told the story to little groups here and there as he called upon his patients. Needless to say that a shipwreck, even though it be only that of a medium-sized pleasure craft, was enough to set everyone all agog with excitement. And here, too, there was the added mystery, concerning the young and beautiful woman together with her strange companion, who had been rescued from death only to vanish so inexplicably.

Next day, Ichabod quite forgot to stop at the town in order to secure the fumigating powders from the physician. As a matter of fact, he was accompanied home by a number of the life-saving crew, who were eager to

survey the wreck and make investigation on their own account. As he approached the Island, the old fisherman was astonished to see at least a dozen launches and fishing schooners gathered near the wreck. It was low tide, and all those aboard the craft seemed to be staring down into the pellucid waters. It was evident that something of an unusual sort attracted their gaze. As Ichabod drew near, accompanied by the boat from the life-saving station, one of the men, on a launch that had her nose resting on the tiny beach at the oyster rocks was seen to be busy arranging a block and tackle. In answer to Ichabod's hail, he shouted that there was a dead man in the wreck.

This information astonished both Ichabod and those to whom he had told his story, for he had had no least suspicion that there was a third person on the yacht at the time of the wreck. In answer to eager questions, the man with the tackle declared that the body seemed to be chained fast to the engine of the sunken boat.

At this news, the Captain became greatly excited.

"Men!" he exclaimed in accents of dismay. "Hain't it been enough for this old, weather-beaten, storm-tossed hulk of an Ichabod to have gone through more'n most young fellers could stand without now havin' a murder to be investigated at his very door? Didn't ye hear them words o' Sumner Jenkins? He says as how the body is chained to the ingine. It's fitten, boys, as we should go right plumb up thar, an' have a look fer ourselves."

A few minutes later, Ichabod and his companions were lying alongside the wreck, and were leaning over gunwales, looking intently down into the transparent depths of the sea. And there, sure enough, lay the form of a man, with distorted features and wide-open dead eyes gazing back up at them. Around the waist of the corpse there was to be seen distinctly the chain that tightly encircled the body and thence ran to the engine frame, around which it was twisted, and held immovable by a huge padlock. Thus fettered, the unfortunate wretch had been carried down to his doom in the sea.

The gruesome discovery had been made that morning by pure chance on the part of a

fisherman who, out of curiosity to view the wreck, had brought his boat up into the wind there. A careless glance over the side had shown him the ghastly face of the corpse beneath the waves. At the sight, the fisherman had let his craft slip off before the wind. He sailed straight to Beaufort, and told the town his news. It was the tidings carried by him that brought the morbid crowd of sightseers.

The combined efforts of those present had been insufficient to raise the engine and the body of the dead man to the surface. Now they were arranging a windlass, with block and fall, to bring the victim up to where the Coroner was impatiently waiting to perform his duty. Presently, then, the energetic workers secured a firm hold with the tackle on the engine frame. It was hauled to the surface, bringing with it the attached body. The padlock was smashed, and the stiffened form released from its iron bonds. Forthwith, the body was removed in one of the small boats to the sandy beach of Captain Ichabod's Island. The Coroner would have preferred that it should be taken into the

shack for the holding of the inquest. But when the official made his request to the fisherman, the reply was by no means favorable.

"It seems as how I might be just a leetle accomidatin', but I dunno, Mr. Coroner, I've already got that place to fumigate out on account o' thar havin' been sickness an' a woman present thar. An' now should ye see fitten to carry that poor murdered feller in thar, Uncle Icky would sure have to quit. It 'ould be just a leetle more'n he could stand. Don't think I'm feared o' hants an' sich fer I hain't. It's just this: The thoughts o' the poor devil, how he just lay thar on the bottom with his eyes wide-open, an' him murdered—them thoughts would keep a-comin' back. No, Mr. Coroner, you'd better not take him into the hut—not unless you aim to buy Ichabod's Island."

The Coroner yielded to the old man's whim. He ordered the sodden and twisted form laid out decently on the white smoothness of the beach. Then, with the other men grouped about him, the Coroner selected a jury, and a minute later the investigation was under way

according to due form of law. The only witnesses who were examined were the man who had discovered the corpse, and Ichabod. There was small need of more. For while the account of the finding of the body was completed within a few minutes, Captain Ichabod's narrative continued for a full hour, during which he told everything he knew concerning the wreck of *The Isabel* and the subsequent events, including the kidnapping of Shrimp.

Most of the hearers, if not all, had heard previously broken bits of the narrative. But now as they received the account in detail from beginning to end they hung on the old fisherman's words, held by the weird spell of this mystery of the sea.

At the conclusion of the testimony, the Coroner charged the jury briefly, and sent them into the shack to agree upon a verdict. The decision was not long delayed. Within ten minutes, the jury returned to the beach and the foreman announced that they had agreed upon a verdict. This was to the effect that the man had come to his death at the hands of parties unknown, while confined

against his will aboard the gasoline yacht *Isabel.*

The Coroner complimented the jury upon their verdict and then discharged the panel. He next arranged with one of the boatmen present for the removal of the corpse to Beaufort, where he meant to have it embalmed and held for a reasonable length of time before burial, for identification. When these formalities were concluded the crowd quickly scattered. Some hastened away to attend their nets, which had been neglected for many hours, while the others set sail or cranked engines for the voyage home.

Captain Ichabod and his friends from the life-saving station decided that they would run over to Shackleford's Banks, and thence sail along shore to approximately the point where Ichabod had seen the rockets of a ship that doubtless went to pieces in the surf during the night of the gale. Their particular destination was a place where the strip of sand was so narrow that they could easily cross it on foot in the expectation of locating the wreck of the unfortunate vessel. Very soon after the party had set out, Captain

Ichabod's spirits lightened. The congenial company of the coast-guard crew, now that he was away from the gruesome association of the Coroner's Court, induced a reaction in his mood, and he was almost cheerful. His companions were anxious to remove the old man's depression and made kindly effort to divert his thoughts into pleasant channels by droll stories and rough banter. When, finally, the party went ashore at Core Banks and walked up the beach along the edge of the breaking surf in search for signs of the wrecked ship, it was Ichabod that walked in the lead with brisk steps and animated face. It seemed scarcely possible in view of his agility and vigor that the old fisherman was indeed living on borrowed time.

It was not long before they began to see huge timbers that had been twisted and rent asunder, which now strewed the beach. They saw, too, others to which were attached sections of the deck and the deck-house, which were lazily riding back and forth to the rhythm of the sea. Now, a wave would drop its bit of flotsam upon the hard sand; then, a moment later, one of greater magnitude

would envelop the stranded spar or plank or piece of cargo, and with its backward flow bear away the wreckage, to be again tossed hither and yon, until perhaps finally the tide at its full would leave it on the shore, to become the spoil of beach-combers—those ghouls ever ready to take advantage of the hapless mariner's mischance.

It was a fact that the whole shore line for over a mile was littered with parts torn away from the foundered schooner. Amid the mass were many barrels of rum and of molasses out of the cargo. As the little squad of men from the station, together with Captain Ichabod, drew near the strip of beach, they saw two fellows working with feverish haste to roll a barrel of molasses over the top of a sand dune, and then down on the Sound side. Captain Ichabod scrambled to the pinnacle of a near-by hill of sand. From this vantage point, he beheld a good-sized two-masted sharpie lying near the shore. The sight made him immediately aware that the beach-combers from up the coast were already on the job, and that the boat on the Sound side of the Banks belonged to them. He knew,

too, that the pair working so desperately to get the barrel away from the wreckage were thus toiling in haste to get their loot aboard the sharpie.

For certain reasons, Captain Ichabod Jones had taken a strong dislike to the professional beach-combers. He believed that a man who would rush to the wreckage of a ship thrown on a barren shore away from civilization, and would appropriate without investigation the valuable articles thus cast up by the sea, was in very sooth not a good citizen—just a plain thief. More than once, indeed, he had seen fit to report men of this stripe, and had caused them no little trouble in the courts over this matter of their pilfering. It is just possible that, had Captain Ichabod not been robbed of the woman he loved years before by one of this class, he might have looked on their depredations with a more lenient eye. Be that as it may, it remains certain that he maintained a very genuine and very bitter spite against all beach-combers.

Captain Ichabod often asserted that it was right for the natives to remove to a place of safety above high tide any articles of value

from a wreck on their shores, and then to wait during a reasonable time for the lawful owners to make their claim. But he had no tolerance for the fellow who would hurriedly and secretly remove to his own premises goods of a salvable sort. He declared this to be no better than theft.

The Captain quickly realized now that here was his opportunity. He motioned to his friends from the station to go on toward the two men busy with the barrel. He, himself, hastened down the slope of sand, in order that he might slip close unseen, and station himself between the beach-combers and their boat. By this method of approach both he and the men from the station would make sure of recognizing the offenders. As the old man drew near the sharpie, which lay with her sails flapping idly in the scant breeze, his eyes took in the name roughly painted on the stern rail of the boat, and he stared at it in shocked amazement. He stopped short and spelled the words aloud:

"*R-o-x-a-n-a L-e-e* !"

At the sound of the name in his ears, a strange expression came over the fisherman's

features. It was an expression compounded of many warring emotions, which it might well have puzzled an observer to interpret. But his muttered soliloquy made his feeling clear.

"Wall, I'll be plumb damned! Here it is, most twenty year since I has spoke them words an' God knows I didn't aim to now, but bein' a leetle slow on spellin', an' kinder beflustered over identifyin' these-here thievin' cusses they got out before I realized what I was sayin'. That boat's named fer my old gal!"

Captain Ichabod had no time for further musing. His attention was attracted by a crackling of twigs in the small brush on the side of the dune. As he looked in the direction of the sound he saw hurtling toward him the barrel of molasses. The two beachcombers had succeeded in topping the rise with their burden; then, suddenly excited and confused by the approach of the coast-guard men, they had turned it loose with a violent push. It shot downward at speed, nor did it stop until it had reached the very edge of the water of Core Sound, almost at Ichabod's

feet. After the heavy barrel came the two plunderers, running rapidly. One of them was a mere lad, certainly not more than nineteen years of age, while the other was of advanced years as was proclaimed by his deeply lined face and gray hair.

As the two drew near, Captain Ichabod quickly concealed himself behind a haw bush, there to await developments. He had a particular reason for not wishing to be recognized by these men—at least not until he should have had time to get his bearings and to decide what course it were best to pursue in this unexpected situation. For that matter, he was half tempted to leave the place without showing himself and without denouncing the paltry thieves.

Ichabod's indecision was not of long duration. His course of action was decided more quickly than he had anticipated by the arrival of the coast-guard men. They had hurried after the fugitives with some apprehension lest the old fisherman might be roughly handled. Now the men descended the slope with a cheer, and in another moment had pounced on the two cringing wretches, who

were eagerly clutching their ill-gotten barrel of "long sweet'nin'," as if loath to give it up.

This was not the first time that old Sandy Mason, for such was the name of the gray-haired man, had been driven away from his nefarious work by the boys from the station. Hitherto, he had been let off with a reprimand. He was sure that such would now be the case. Nevertheless, his heart was sore within him, for he knew that the coming of these servants of Uncle Sam must prevent him from taking away in his sharpie a whole winter's supply, and more, of fine old Porto Rico molasses—a treasure trove indeed. For the dwellers on the banks have little butter, and molasses, when it is to be had, serves in a measure as a substitute, at every meal.

There was only a short struggle, for the beach-combers offered no resistance, except at being separated from the precious barrel. The capture was chiefly an affair for merriment to the men of the coast guard, and, when they finally loosened their hold of Sandy and the lad, his son, they were laughing boisterously at the despair on the countenance of the father and the youngster's look of chagrin.

Then, before a word was spoken and while the men were still roaring with mirth, Captain Ichabod stepped forth from the shelter of the haw tree. He seemed to stand a little more erect than was his wont. There was a twinkle of delight in those kindly eyes, a little dimmed by age. He bore himself with an air of impressive manliness, despite the burden of his years. He passed around the group until he stood directly in front of the beach-comber with the gray hair. For a moment he did not speak, but stood motionless, gazing steadily at the fellow before him. But, presently, he raised his hand in a gesture commanding silence. The laughter of the coast guard ceased on the instant, and the fisherman spoke:

"Men," he said in a steady voice, evidently weighing each word, "as I clim over the top o' yonder dune an' come down the slope to the shore I saw that sharpie with her nose snug-up to the shore. As I came on further I saw an' read aloud her name—*Roxana Lee.* Right then was the fust time that name had passed my lips in twenty year. It hurt me to speak it, fer 'twas that o' the only woman I have ever loved—or ever lost until just

lately. The words was on my lips afore I knowed it. That woman did not die, pass away like an honest woman, but she ran off with a low-down beach-comber, whose thieving face I hain't looked upon—like the name on the stern rail o' yonder boat—fer twenty year, until to-day. Neither have I spoke his name. Seein' as how so many things has been a-happenin' here lately that is a-changin' things with me, I will say to you men—that varmint, that low-down robber o' the dead an' o' the livin' whose clawlike hands you have unhooked from the chymes o' the barrel containin' the stolen 'lasses that he hoped to get home fer Roxana Lee to wallop her dodgers in, is no less or no other than Sandy Mason, the thief who stole my gal twenty year ago, an' if I hain't plumb wrong on family favorin', that striplin' is their son."

To all outward appearance, old Ichabod was perfectly calm. The men from the station regarded the speaker with faces grown suddenly stern as they realized the nature of the wrong done him. Neither Sandy Mason nor his son ventured to utter a syllable, as the fisherman continued:

"Sandy, you may think as how tain't none o' my affair, an' that I'd look a heap better to keep my lip out o' it. Maybe as how that's a fact, but God knows when I'll ever get another chance to rub it in hard on the likes o' you. I've heard, year after year, that you was still at the old tricks—too lazy to work, with your eye always turned to the sea hoping that some poor devil would misread his reckonin' an' put his ship where you can ransack its vitals fer an easy livin' fer you and yours. I'll lay my all agin a two pence that that wife o' your'n has wished many's the time that she had married an honest man an' not a thief. Judging from what I knew o' her years ago, I'll allow that it mighty nigh breaks her heart to see the man that infatuated her as a gal a-takin' her child an' a-bringin' him up in the ways o' a thief. Shame on ye, Sandy Mason! I'm goin' to ask the boys to turn ye loose, an' I hope to God that this will be a lesson that ye'll not soon forget, an' that ye'll straighten up an' be a man afore it's too late. If so be you an' the woman are past redemption, quit

your thievin' an' beach-combin' for the sake o' the boy."

Ichabod then turned to the lad, and addressed him in a kindly voice.

"Young man, I'm sorry to have had to hurt your feelin's with the truth, an' I hope ye'll forgive me. Take this experience of to-day as a warnin'. Don't be a beach-comber. For when you are, to my mind, you are what folks call a grave-robber—a ghoul. Now go home to your mammy, who used to have some good thoughts. Unless they're all gone through livin' with that no-'count daddy o' your'n, she'll tell you that Captain Ichabod is right fer once. Yes, I say, quit it all! Be a man, an' show folks, that, after all, it *is* possible to make a silk purse out o' a sow's ear."

After this parting thrust, Ichabod turned on his heel without another word, and walked swiftly away down the shore. The men from the station added a few phrases of very trenchant advice to Sandy and his son. They waited until the beach-combers had entered the sharpie and set sail due north toward the hamlet of Portsmouth.

When the coast guard came up again with Captain Ichabod, they found him seated on the sand hard by the noisy breakers. Three Dominick hens clucked about him. The old fisherman was throwing them kernels of corn, which he took from his pocket. The men gazed somewhat somberly at the fowls. It was plain that these were the only creatures that had escaped alive from the three-master whose bones littered the beach.

Ichabod looked up at his friends with a wry smile, that was touched with grimness.

"Boys," he remarked whimsically, "it seems to me as if Icky had had about enough reminders fer one day without these pesky Dominick pullets a-buttin' in."

CHAPTER XI

The Awakening of Ichabod

THE door to the fisherman's shack stood ajar, and in the opening showed the form of a man. As the light from the newly risen moon fell full upon the wrinkled features of the face, a pleased, contented smile was to be seen as he placidly puffed his corncob pipe and blew rings before him in the quiet, heavy, midnight air. It was Captain Ichabod, home again after the momentous happenings of the day when the dead body was found in the wreck of *The Isabel.*

The Captain had been more or less methodical in his ways all his life, but he had never carried routine so far as to keep a diary. Probably during the past twenty years, living the life he had upon his lonely island, there had not been enough of incident to have suggested even the idea of such a record. But on this particular night, the fisherman, clos-

eted within his shack, had been toiling through three long hours in order to set down a detailed narrative of the strange happenings in which he had been concerned since the coming of the great storm. He had ransacked his belongings until he found pencil and paper. Then, with his characteristically painstaking and deliberate manner, he had indited an itemized account of the various events. Now he had completed his work, and rested well content with his accomplishment. As he lounged in the doorway, he was taking a glimpse over the beautiful expanse of water, the while he smoked a final pipe before turning in. He felt that after the arduous endeavors of the day he was entitled to a sound and refreshing sleep. His usual calm had returned to him.

At daylight that very morning when he awakened in the life-saving station at old Fort Macon, he had felt that he could never again occupy his old cabin home. Yet, here he was at night, resting well satisfied, without any qualm whatsoever. The exciting happening of the day—perhaps especially the opportunity to tell his old rival just what he

thought of the fellow—had proved a balm to his over-strained nerves. He had come back home with a firm resolve to continue on there in tranquillity, and to enjoy to the full the days that were before him. It is true that he missed Shrimp. But, after mature meditation on the matter of the fowl's going away, the fisherman had about come to the conclusion that in all probability he had gone of his own free will and accord. It occurred to the Captain as possible that the bird might have been peeved by his master's sailing away without him as he hurried to Beaufort Town in quest of Doctor Hudson. Ichabod believed that Shrimp had seen his opportunity to cross to the mainland with the strangers and had seized on it in the hope of being able at last to fight it out with his rooster rival, whose challenging salute had been tantalizing him for many a day. Ichabod chuckled as he expressed the wish that Shrimp's encounter with this rival might give him as much satisfaction as had his own with the beach-comber.

Now, under the flow of his meditations, the old man grew loquacious. He went into

the shack, shut the door and lighted the lamp. Then he sprawled at ease in his favorite chair, and since there was no other auditor at hand, talked to himself.

"Wall! I reckon I have larned a heap this day. The most important fact is that Icky Jones has been a fool for over twenty year. Jest because a no-'count woman took a notion in her haid that she had rather marry a beach-combin' thief than an honest fisherman I have made myself hate all o' the rest o' the gender, or least-wise to keep away fr'm 'em, an' lead a miserable lonely life. Why! do ye know, I believe that when I spunked up an' told old Sandy Mason what I thought o' him an' his callin', an' rubbed it in some on the poor kid, that it did me more good than a dost o' medicine. It sure put sand in my craw an' made me feel like fightin' every mean thing livin'. If I hadn't been a narrow-fool, an' awful sot in my way, instead o' takin' the loss of Roxana Lee to heart, I'd 'a' braced up an' gone right ahead an' looked fer one o' the right sort. I've learned jest a short time back that I'd gone off on the wrong track. When I revived

that fine-lookin' foreign woman an' she opened those eyes—such beautiful brown eyes!—an' looked at me so appealin'-like an' called me Doctor, I jest couldn't he'p but wish that she'd talk to me a leetle more, but fate was agin me, an' she was mum as an adder."

Captain Ichabod fell silent as he undressed for the night, extinguished the light and stretched himself luxuriously on his bed. As he snuggled down into the blankets with a capacious yawn, he drowsily spoke aloud yet once again.

"Wall, hanged if I 'lowed this mornin' when I woke up at the station, that to-night I'd be a-layin' here so peaceable-like an' jest a-pinin' fer sleep. This shack an' this bunk has had a woman in 'em, but I don't reckin it has hurt 'em none after all. I can sleep, you bet. Uncle Icky may dream a leetle might, but it won't be about Roxana Lee."

It was not until the sun was more than an hour high that the old fisherman opened his eyes again to the realization that another day had come. When he felt the warm rays of the summer sun upon his cheek he knew that he

had slept beyond his usual time of waking, which stirred him to a fleeting anger against himself. He got up quickly, and while he dressed, admonished himself harshly.

"Betwixt the rust o' time an' a thievin' yachtsman, ye're plumb out o' time, Ichabod. If ye aim to be a successful fisherman in the future as in the past, you must either find ye another rooster, or buy a clock, an' I reckin that a clock, what will run, but can't run away, is the thing fer you."

Breakfast over, Ichabod busied himself in getting his nets and other fishing paraphernalia straightened out, for in his hurry to put them out of harm's way as the big blow came on, he had got them pretty badly tangled. It was mid-forenoon before he considered that things about the shack and door yard were about as they should be at the place of a first-class fisherman. Occasionally as he worked, he would glance toward the oyster rocks, where lay the remains of *The Isabel*, and he would wonder once again what could have been the occasion of the curious crime that had resulted in the death of the man chained to the engine. But all

his musings brought only increased perplexity, until his wits were totally befuddled. He dare be sure only that the yachtsman he had rescued was either a villain or a maniac.

It was a custom in the Sound Country for the natives at frequent intervals to favor their preacher, their doctor and the editor of the gossipy local newspaper with a gift of something attractive, either grown in their vegetable gardens, or taken from the waters round about. In this respect, Ichabod was not different from his neighbors of the other islands and the mainland. Many a time and oft, after he had made a particularly good catch of the delicious stone crabs or scallops, he had set sail to carry an offering of the delicacies to friends in the town. To-day, after he had finally established order in his house and among his accoutrements, he shouldered his clam fork, and, carrying a large bucket to hold the catch, strode out on the point. The tide was extremely low, and Ichabod was aware that now was the time to reach the place where round clams grew in great abundance. The old man was an expert at

locating these shell-fish. The keyhole sign made by them in the sand was so familiar to him that he could walk along at a smart pace, while peering alertly here and there in search of it. When his eyes caught the mark, he would strike quickly with his fork into the yielding sand, and so bring to the surface one of the luscious bivalves. On this occasion, Ichabod filled his bucket well within the hour, and then, content, returned to the shack for a midday meal.

When he was done eating, the fisherman washed the clams carefully and wrapped them in a neat bundle. He then took them on board the skiff, and made sail for Beaufort Town, to pay his promised visit to Doctor Hudson, and to present him with the morning's catch, which was of particularly good quality. In addition, he was prompted to the trip by anxiety to learn if anything had been heard in the town as to the identity of the yacht *Isabel*, or of those who voyaged in her.

On this occasion, the customary group of loungers was not present on the shore to welcome the little red skiff and her skipper.

The quay was practically deserted. The fishing fleet had put to sea again in order to take advantage of as many days as possible with favorable weather for their labor. Ichabod made his boat fast, and then with his bundle of clams took his way at once to the physician's house. Doctor Hudson himself met the fisherman at the threshold with a warm handshake.

"Why, Ichabod!" he exclaimed, with a cheery smile. "Now, what in the world has come over you? In all my life I don't think I ever saw such a change for the better in a man's appearance within the few hours since I saw you last. I guess that wrecks and strange women and the finding of dead men in the sea agree with you."

Ichabod grinned assent.

"Yes, Doctor, I 'low that I'm improved a sight," he replied enthusiastically. "I come down to bring ye a few clams, an' to tell ye that since I saw ye I found a housekeepin' job fer life. An' so, while I'm obleeged to ye fer a-keepin' your weather eye open fer me, why, ye needn't no more, fer I've beat ye to it."

Doctor Hudson looked a little disconcerted.

"Why, Ichabod, are you really goin' to leave the Island?"

The fisherman shook his head solemnly.

"No, sir, I ain't a-goin' to leave the Island except on business, an' to call on my friends. I've took the job right thar. I've done hired out to the new Ichabod Jones, an' I cal'late I'll be the most satisfactory help ole Icky ever had."

"What in the world do you mean?" the Doctor questioned, with much perplexity. "I'd suppose you were clean crazy, if it weren't for a mischievous twinkle in your eye. Come on now, and tell me what really has happened. I am interested all right, for it must have been something important to make this remarkable change in you, which I can't understand."

Ichabod nodded sagely before he replied.

"Right you are, Doctor. But it took a heap more than a sudden scare like what cured the feller with the hiccoughs. Yes, it took more'n that to cure me. You know, Doc, I think now, as how I was diseased."

The physician perceived that nothing was

to be gained by any attempt at hurrying the old man.

"Come on into the house," he urged, "and make yourself comfortable while you tell me the whole story."

As the two came into the reception-room, the Captain fumbled in his inside coat pocket for a moment, and then carefully drew forth his narrative of the events in which he had been concerned during the last few days. He handed this to the physician as the two seated themselves by the open window.

"Doctor," Ichabod declared with gravity, "I never did think as how I was a partic'lar good story-teller, an' knowin' as how you an' one or two other friends o' mine would have to know the story, I made up my mind last night that I'd put it into writ fer you-all, so then thar couldn't be no dispute as to the exact words of Ichabod. The story starts right from the beginning o' the blow. A part of it, the first part, you already know, so jest skip along until ye come to whar Sandy Mason shows up."

Doctor Hudson perused the document with great interest. The unconscious drollery of

the old man's literary style gave piquancy to the account. At times, the fisherman's bits of humor were amusing enough; again, there was often pathos of a very genuine sort, in the paragraphs. But as the physician neared the end of the roughly written record, the Captain interrupted him.

"Say, Doc," he asked, "would ye mind a-readin' o' that last stanzy right out loud? I think it has got stuff in it that'll make my blood warm up a heap to hear it read."

The doctor nodded assent, for he at this moment reached the paragraph by which the old man set such store.

"I, Ichabod Jones," the words ran, "age unknown, bein' as how the family Bible was burnt up, announces to my friends, all an' sundry, that fer the past twenty year I've been a coward an' a fool, but was not a-knowin' of the same until to-day. I ain't been called to preach nor nothin' like that. I has jest *woke up!* From this day on to the end o' me in this world, I aim to git all o' the honest enjoyment I kin out o' this life. An' I want my friends to know that the rule for twenty

year as made an' provided has been busted. From this day forward women, ole an' young, will find a welcome on the shore an' in the shack at Ichabod's Island."

CHAPTER XII

Toward the Unknown

WHEN Captain Ichabod left the Island in haste to get medical help for the unconscious Ethel Marion, Doctor Gifford Garnet stood before the shack and watched the red skiff as it rose and fell on the billows until it was well on its way to Beaufort. Then, with a smile of satisfaction, he turned and entered the abode where the girl was lying with no sign of life save the gentle rhythm of the bosom as it rose and fell with her breathing. Now, once again, he knelt by the bedside. For a little, he stroked the forehead with deft fingers, then touched her wrist and counted the pulse. It was evident that he found the condition of his patient satisfactory, for a pleased expression came in place of the anxiety that had hitherto marked his features.

Leaving the bedside, Doctor Garnet went to the kitchen stove, where he opened the oven door and took out the batteries he had removed from the little cedar tender. The intense heat of the oven had thoroughly dried these, so that they were again in working condition, together with the spark coil. The Doctor carried the attachments from the shack to the launch, in which he installed them. This accomplished, he succeeded, after a great deal of straining effort, in getting launched the small craft, which had been left high up on the sand. By means of an oar, he paddled the boat around to the Captain's miniature wharf. He made it fast here and then busied himself in tuning up the engine. When at last it was running smoothly, he threw in the clutch, and steered the launch toward the wreck of *The Isabel.* As he neared the oyster rocks, he slowed down the engine, and ran directly over the sunken part of the vessel. There, he peered intently over the side into the depths of the water. Of a sudden, he drew back as if in fright, and his face became ghastly pale. He threw in the clutch and steered at full speed back for the

landing. One glimpse of the dead eyes glaring up at him had sufficed. Though he was a physician, inured to dreadful sights, he quailed before this hideous spectacle.

At the landing, he hurriedly made the boat fast, and then ran swiftly to the shack. He disappeared for a moment inside, and then came forth bearing his medicine case and blankets. He stowed the case in the launch and spread out the blankets in the bow. This done, he returned to the shack. When he issued from it again, he staggered under a burden almost too great for his strength—the unconscious form of Ethel Marion. He bore her with what haste he could to the landing and gently placed her within the blankets.

At this moment, Doctor Garnet looked in all reality the part of a wild man. He was coatless and hatless. The strong breeze made new tangles in his already disheveled hair. Then, through long seconds, he stood staring bleakly at the distorted and broken yacht. Abruptly there came from his lips a weird wail of distress. That cry meant that everything good in life was over for him. His

face set in sullen lines, as he loosed the painter and seated himself aft by the engine. He opened the throttle, and, heading to the northward, soon left the sands of Ichabod's Island and those staring eyes of the dead man far behind.

So absorbed had the Doctor been in his purpose of flight that he failed even to see the action of Shrimp. Just as the launch began to move away from the wharf, the rooster leaped lightly to the forward deck. It never occurred to him that he might be unwelcome. He entered the boat as he would have the skiff for a voyage with Ichabod. He was a sociable bird, and fond of a cruise. When the opportunity offered he seized on it with pleased promptness. By the time that Doctor Gifford Garnet chanced to observe Shrimp's presence, the launch was at such a distance from the Island that it would have been folly for him to turn back for the sake of restoring the creature to its place.

The launch tossed and pitched dangerously when it came into the broad reaches of Core Sound. It seemed indeed at times that it must inevitably be swamped. But the Doc-

tor had skill and daring, and now, in the face of this new danger, he was cool and resourceful. Here there were no rocks to increase the danger as there had been at Ichabod's Island, and eventually he guided the launch to safety under the lea of the wooded shore of the mainland.

The first intention of Garnet was to make a landing in order to await the coming of night, when, as he knew from past experiences, the wind would almost certainly fall, after which the voyage could be resumed without danger and in comparative comfort. The Doctor found, however, that his plan was impossible of execution. To his discomfiture, he perceived that the heavily wooded shore was nothing other than a vast swamp, without anywhere a dry spot on which to step foot. Upon making this discovery, he allowed the boat to drift a short distance away from the land, and then dropped overboard the tiny anchor.

After the launch was made secure, the Doctor took from his pocket the hypodermic syringe. The vial accompanying it, how-

ever, was empty. Garnet searched feverishly through his medicine case, at first in despair, for he feared that he had no more of the drug. But at last he uttered an ejaculation of triumph as he drew forth a small bottle of the narcotic. He removed the cork and dropped the pellets into the palm of his hand. He counted them rapidly, before replacing all but one in the bottle. The quantity of the drug was so small as to fill him with the worst apprehensions. A man held as was Garnet in the clutch of an evil habit would be placed in a horrible position, were he to run out of his morphia supply, while thus storm-bound along the desolate shores of Core Sound. He shuddered at the dreadful thought of such catastrophe. Then he tried to forget the haunting fear, the while he made his preparations for loading the syringe. Though his fastidiousness was revolted, he had no choice but to use the brackish water from over the side to dissolve the pellet for the shot. When, finally, the task was completed and the syringe duly charged, he did not again bare the girl's arm for an injection.

Now that his stock was running low, perhaps his selfishness forbade any bestowal of the drug on another; or, perhaps, his trained eye told him that the further stupefying of her would react dangerously. So, the liquid in its entirety was forced into his own arm through the needle's puncture. It was only a matter of a few minutes before the efficacy of the drug was made manifest. The nervousness that had marked the physician's manner fell away from him. His countenance wore a serene aspect. Presently he settled himself comfortably on an upholstered seat and then without more ado fell sound asleep.

Garnet did not awaken until the shades of night were fast settling over the waters. In all probability, he would have slumbered on much longer, had it not been for his acutely sensitive hearing, which caught the sound of a tiny voice. It was hardly more than a whisper that issued from out the blankets in the bow. It was the voice of Ethel Marion calling him. This was the first time she had spoken since the moment of semi-consciousness upon the Island when she had been revived

by the ministrations of Captain Ichabod. Now she spoke once, and again, the single word:

"Doctor!"

Garnet sprang up and hurried to her side.

"Yes, Miss Marion," he exclaimed soothingly as he came to her.

As he knelt by her side, she bade him welcome with a smile in which pleasure and confidence were blended. Indeed, the girl felt that she was quite safe from any possibility of harm while in the company of the trusted family physician. But she realized that she was very weak, and, too, her mind was by no means clear. She was unaware that she was in fact hundreds of miles distant from home and friends. She rested in a reclining position so that the gunwales of the launch were high enough to shut off a vision of the shore. Otherwise, the luxuriant swamp growth must have shown her that she was far south of New York Harbor. Ethel was familiar with the Sound Country from having traversed it in voyaging to and from Florida points. Could she now have seen, she would

have recognized the giant gum trees and cypress, garnished with festoons of Spanish moss that swayed gently under the impact of the lessening breeze.

"Oh, Doctor!" she queried. "Have I been ill? I feel so strange in my head, and I am so weak, and, oh, so hungry!"

"Yes, Miss Marion," replied Garnet in his most suave manner, "you have been ill, but are now very much improved. If you will just lie quiet and try to sleep a little more, I will soon have you where you can have plenty of good things to eat, and your strength will return as rapidly as it left you. I'm not going to tell you more at this time. I shall wait until you've had some nourishment and are strong enough to listen to a long story."

Ethel forbore further questioning. She simply smiled again and resumed her sleep. Garnet drew out the hypodermic syringe, then hesitated. He remembered how limited was his stock of morphia. After a moment more of doubt, he shook his head decidedly and restored the syringe to his pocket. It was only too apparent to him that he must hus-

band his supply with miserly care if he would not suffer the tortures of the damned.

Garnet slipped quietly back to his place by the engine. The sky was now quite clear again, and as the darkness deepened the wind continued to fall, until there was almost perfect calm. It was safe enough now for the little boat to proceed on her way. The Doctor raised the anchor and started the engine. He steered out from the shore resolutely, without any sign of wavering, heading toward the northward. But for what port he sailed was the secret of his own drug-crazed brain alone. Was it his intention to hide away for a time in some sparsely settled section of the Sound country, where he could depend upon getting supplies from the kind-hearted, simple-living coast dwellers? Or did he mean to go back over the way he had come in this frail craft? To do this, could have but one ending—the final disaster.

The heavy darkness of the early night hours was soon dispelled. Far to the eastward, the golden moon at the full came creeping up from behind a huge sand dune upon Core Banks. Its gentle luminousness

fell over the expanse of water and showed the launch clearly as it voyaged toward the unknown. . . . And that same radiance shone upon a lover seeking wildly for the girl of his heart—and seeking in vain.

CHAPTER XIII

Among the Fisherfolk

THIS night was not different from other nights along the western shores and estuaries of the Sound Country. For that matter, the people of the Hunting Quarter and Cedar Island section are not very greatly changed in their manners and customs from those of their forebears of many generations ago. Grouped in small settlements of just a few houses each, they live there to-day after the fashion of those same forebears in almost every detail. The houses are the same or at least they are carefully patterned after those built by the first settlers so many generations ago.

There is no doubt concerning the ancestry of these folk. A little conversation with the natives is enough to make one realize that he is listening here to a speech redolent of the days of Chaucer, a speech richly flavored

with the colloquialisms of the Elizabethan era. Some of the familiar folk-lore tales might well have emanated from the poet himself, both for their language and their spirit.

And these descendants of an early English stock have preserved not only the ancient speech, but they have maintained the generous courtesy of a former time, when Sir Walter Raleigh spread his mantle in the mire in order that his queen might pass dry shod. And real courtesy includes always an unhesitating and ungrudging hospitality. The dwellers in this isolated region are surpassed by none in their warm welcome of any wayfarer who may come to them.

They have no highway or railroad connection with the outside world. The only means is voyaging by small boats, a method necessarily slow at the best, and often quite impossible. It is claimed that good roads and the railways are essential factors in the education of any community, and the claim is, doubtless, just. But it would be well, perhaps, if some of those who boast of their education were to be cast among these illit-

erates, there to gain a new appreciation of their own language, shorn of its modern barbarities and the atrocities of slang. It is a curious fact that many of these persons who can neither read nor write, nevertheless, possess a vocabulary beyond that of many a grammar-school graduate. Schools have been few and far between in this lonely place. Yet the very isolation has tended to preserve the purity of the local speech.

To-night the inhabitants of the settlement are resting upon their tiny porches, for the air is over-warm and only the slightest bit of breeze is stirring. What little there is of it comes from the forest hard by, and brings with it a plague of numberless mosquitoes. Because of them a huge smudge is kept going close beside every house. But for this defense the insects' victims would be forced to take refuge within doors, with every window and door fast shut. But, after all, they are accustomed to this affliction whenever the wind blows off the land. They seem to suffer little, if at all, from the volume of smoke that would strangle the unaccustomed. It would seem indeed that they would require

no masks against the poisonous gases loosed against them by a warrior foe. The most patient sufferers from the pests are those young ladies who are entertaining their lovers. Those of their age go barefooted late this season. The smoke does not lie close to the floor. So they are kept busy slapping at ankles and toes while they listen as best they can to the words of love uttered by their suitors.

But to-night most of the men are fishing. The season for the gray trout or weak fish has arrived. Of late years a new method for successfully catching them has crept in from the Beaufort section, whither it was brought by some unknown foreigner. After its first coming, it was quickly taken up by all the dwellers along the Sound. The method of it is to suspend a fire of lightwood knots, which is built within a hollow, gratelike iron frame over the water. The fire throws a strong light into the depths, which attracts the fish in swarms. As they come close to the surface, toward the fire of pine knots, the fisherman deftly slips beneath them a net shaped like those used for crabbing. By a quick

upward movement, the wriggling fish are drawn safely to skiff or shore as the case may be.

Such a method of fishing will not appeal to a disciple of Izaak Walton, but one must remember that these primitive folk are not fishing for the sport that is to be found in the pursuit. It is their way of earning a livelihood. It is a matter of necessity, not of choice, with them.

Doctor Garnet realized that it would not be well for Ethel to remain exposed to the chill dampness of the night. He was also aware that she had taken no nourishment throughout the day, and was, therefore, in a peculiarly susceptible condition. So he steered the launch close in to shore, seeking eagerly for the lights of some friendly hamlet. But to-night there was a landward breeze, so that all lights were extinguished to avoid attracting the mosquitoes. There were only the smudges burning, and these rarely showed any blaze underneath the drifting clouds of smoke. It was the custom to stifle at once any flare of the fire, in order to maintain the smoke at the densest.

It was the fishermen's lights between Hunting Quarter and Cedar Island that gave the Doctor his first glimpse of life anywhere in the vicinity. Many boats had passed him going up and down the water way, but this strange man had studiously avoided hailing them, or being hailed by them. He was not willing to run the risk of being reported by any craft so encountered.

Then, presently, he observed twenty-five or thirty of the lights burning upon the water within a radius of a half mile. Some of them appeared to be directly on the water's edge, while others were scattered over the surface of the Sound. He wondered greatly at the weird sight, but his drug-crazed nerves left him no courage to investigate the phenomenon. But, of a sudden, the blanket-wrapped form in the bow stirred. There came the gentle noise of a healthy yawn, and then the girl's voice called:

"Doctor Garnet! Won't you please take me home—wherever that is—or some place where there is food? I'm just as hungry as I can be!"

"Yes, Miss Marion," the physician an-

swered glibly. "We'll soon be where there is both food and shelter. I'm so glad to find you improved! My patient will soon be herself again."

"Yes," the girl agreed, "I am improved, Doctor. I feel quite myself again, and I'm wondering where I am and what has happened. I must have been unconscious for some time," she added thoughtfully, "for the ankle I sprained while boarding *The Isabel* is almost well. Do you know, there is very little I remember after that? I recall the awakening in the morning and the finding that the yacht was at sea and then your coming to my assistance when I discovered that I was locked in my room. Please, Doctor, won't you explain this whole affair to me? Were we kidnapped by river thieves, and did you succeed in escaping with me? Somehow, I have an impression that we're a long way from New York Harbor." Even in the faint light from the moon, Ethel could see that the physician was perturbed by her questioning. The fact startled her, aroused a vague suspicion. She spoke now with an authoritative quality in her voice.

"Doctor, what is the meaning of this reticence? Why do you show such emotion? Has something dreadful happened? Surely, an explanation is my due."

Garnet perceived that he had at last a sane, sensible woman with whom to deal. He knew that it would be necessary for him to treat her as such, to give her a satisfactory and rational explanation. But he had the cunning of that partial madness induced by the drug. He meant to have that cunning stimulated to even a greater degree. For even while the girl was speaking, he contrived to arrange another charge for the hypodermic. To avoid attracting her attention, he did not even roll up his sleeve to insert the point into his flesh. Instead, he inserted it through coat and shirt. In an emergency such as this, he had no need for the aseptic niceties characteristic of his profession. He had no thought of bacteria from the cloth to infect the wound. His sole concern was to feel within him the increased thrill of the morphia. His nerves must be at their best to combat the inquisitiveness of this intelligent young woman, now in the possession of her normal

mind. He understood perfectly that his narrative of events must contain such a skillful mingling of truth and falsehood as to leave her without any doubt whatsoever concerning his own integrity. Otherwise, there must come disgrace for himself, the ruin of his career. He spoke then suavely, genially even.

"Right you are, Miss Ethel. You were kidnapped—taken miles and miles from your home. I trust you are strong enough now to hear the story—properly censored—that I have to tell you. I think, though, it will be sufficient, for the time being, to inform you that you are now absolutely safe. I regret to advise you that *The Isabel* is no more. She was driven on the rocks, and is a total wreck. Yet, perhaps, it is better so. Your kidnapper was trying to run out into the open sea when the tempest was such that no yacht of such tonnage could have endured the fury of the waves. So the wreck probably saved your life, for you were rescued unharmed with the exception of a mild concussion of the brain, which left you unconscious for some time. And you may be glad now, since you have aroused from the stupor, that you have

no memory of the many harrowing scenes connected with this affair. I also was rescued, and am doing my utmost to return you to your friends safe and sound. To-night, we're going northward on the waters of Core Sound, off the North Carolina mainland. The great sand dunes of Core Banks, which you have admired so many times in passing through these waters while cruising with your father, are just visible off the starboard bow in the moonlight. Off the port bow are many tiny lights, which I confess are a mystery to me. I have a suspicion, however, that they are shown by fishermen craft. I think it best to head for them in the hope that we may obtain shelter and food. And now, my dear patient," the Doctor concluded briskly, "please let this statement be sufficient for the time being. Then, by-and-by, I will tell you in full the most wonderful story of adventure that any little New York girl has ever experienced."

"Thank you, so much!" Ethel responded gratefully. "Now that I've had this much of the story from you, I'll promise to be as patient as possible. Just the same, I'm awfully

anxious to hear it all in its completeness. I love adventure, and I am afraid I can't exactly be sorry that I've lived through one myself. I'm more sorry for poor father down there on that desolate border, for I know how he is looking forward to another cruise in the poor *Isabel.* I must wire him promptly, so that he'll be able to have the yacht duplicated without delay."

The physician was immensely elated that his narrative was so well received by the girl. With a new feeling of safety and contentment he headed the launch toward the light that seemed nearest the shore. It was not long until they reached the roughly constructed pier. Upon the extreme end of it sat a solitary man fishing with fire and net.

As they approached the shore, Garnet was able to make out the shadowy outlines that bulked in the distance as a half-dozen small houses. Beside each a smudge sent forth clouds of heavy smoke. He was heartened by the scene, for he knew well the hospitality of the southern home, and he was confident that within the walls of one of these humble cottages would be found food and rest for

himself and the girl in his charge. Yet even in this moment, the physician wondered if indeed there would ever be real rest for him while he should remember the staring, accusing eyes that looked up at him from the water's depth.

Garnet brought the tender alongside the wharf in shore, at a sufficient distance from the man to avoid disturbing the fishing. Then he climbed out upon the frail, wooden structure built upon poles driven into the bottom, and made his way over its swaying surface to the native by the fire. This proved to be "Squire" Goodwin, the big man of the settlement. He was of an appearance above the average, and handsome still in spite of fifty-odd years of toil and exposure. He rose at Garnet's approach, and, without waiting to be addressed, spoke with an air of genial familiarity.

"I don't usually go a-firin' for trout this late o' night, but the truth is that between the hell-fired skeeters and the gals havin' beaux there wasn't much for me to enjoy at home. My name's Goodwin," he added by way of introduction. "They call me Squire

all around these parts. I'm the justice o' the peace. So be you're after a warrant?"

The last word affected Garnet very unpleasantly, and he shook his head with such grim emphasis that the Squire perceived he had been mistaken as to the stranger's purpose.

"No?" he remarked. "Well, then, maybe it's fair for me to make another guess." A twinkle shone now in his clear eyes. "Judging from the face that the moon just lighted up there in the bow of your snapper, I don't believe I'd be far wrong in judging ye two to be worldly folks that think a squire's good as a parson. What mout you're name be, stranger?"

At this blunt demand, Garnet again showed traces of embarrassment, but these endured only for an instant. He realized that in this place so remote from the ordinary lanes of travel there could be little danger in divulging his identity. So he spoke with brisk confidence.

"My name, sir, is Gifford Garnet, I am a physician. The young lady lying in the launch yonder is my patient. We were so

unfortunate as to be wrecked while on a yacht cruising in the waters to the south of here. We are now on our way northward, bound for one of the larger towns, where we shall be able to get transportation home. The young lady is suffering from an injured ankle, and, too, she has been for some time unconscious from a blow on the head received while we were escaping from the yacht. It is only within the last hour that she has seemed to be again quite normal. We were obliged to lay to in the lower section of the Sound for several hours, waiting for the weather to moderate. Otherwise we would not have been obliged to put in here and beg you for food and lodging. If you can take care of us over night I shall be only too glad to pay you for your hospitality."

"Pay me for my hospitality!" the Squire exclaimed indignantly. "That's something in my locality that's never been for sale, and can't be bought. You-all must be from the North. I've heard folks from the outside say that folks up there pay for everything, even for a place to hang their hats in public houses. Folks that pay for everything they

get lose all love for each other." His tone changed abruptly, and he spoke authoritatively. "Get that young woman out o' the boat and after I make another dip, I'll take ye up and show ye one shack where hospitality ain't for sale. And when you go please remember that you don't leave under any obligation to Squire Goodwin. I will say though, if ye ever catch me in you-all's fix, and ye he'p me out, then I won't offer to pay you for your hospitality. I just don't believe in it!"

The Squire skipped back to his firelight, and the Doctor watched him toss four flopping, wriggling beauties upon the wharf. As the fish fell from the net, the Squire shouted triumphantly:

"Say, Doctor, there's a mornin' meal you-all can't pay for!"

The task of getting Ethel Marion from the boat to the shore was not as difficult as Garnet had anticipated. She was buoyed up wonderfully by the thought that comfortable quarters awaited her and good clean food to satisfy an appetite that was fast becoming ravenous. Had it not been for the injured

ankle, she could have walked as rapidly as either of the men from the landing stage to the house. But when she rested her full weight on it, she found that it was still painful, so that it was necessary for the Doctor to support her on one side while the Squire gallantly gave his aid on the other.

As they reached the porch, there was a stealthy sound of scurrying and the pattering of bare feet, as the young-men callers slipped away in the darkness to their homes. Then the two young women hastened forward to greet the strangers in true Core Sound style. "Ma" was in bed, they explained, but they themselves, with easy, unaffected kindness proceeded to make the invalid at home. Then one of them hurried into the cook-room to prepare a quick meal.

Ethel Marion, a girl of high society in New York City, and reared in luxury, had hitherto known little of humble homes such as this in which now she was being cared for so generously. As she glanced about her, she saw that the walls were not covered with a paper especially prepared for the purpose, in the manner to which she had been accus-

tomed. Instead, they carried sheets of ordinary newspapers, most of them of a religious character. It was a quaint and indisputable witness to the fact that here she was in the home of a God-loving, Christian family. All of the furnishings were simple; most of them of great age. Among them were antiques to warm a collector's heart. It was plain that these had been handed down through many generations. Those of later origin were carefully wrought duplicates of the choicest models. In her astonishment amid surroundings so strange and yet so pleasant, with the savor of cooking food in her nostrils, Ethel for the moment almost forgot the mystery and the peril through which she had passed—almost forgot, for a fleeting instant, the lover she had summoned to her aid by a message cast into the sea.

CHAPTER XIV

Garnet the Hero

THE dwellers of the Sound Country are early risers. For this reason, Ethel Marion was up and dressed next morning earlier than ever before in her life. The dawn was just breaking when breakfast was announced. One of the buxom girls came to offer her services in dressing the invalid stranger. Then she was assisted to the porch for a breath of the early morning air, and she exclaimed in delight over the splendid view there unfolded. Far off to the eastward the sun was just climbing up from behind a sand dune on the Banks. For miles up and down the coast the broken sand hills ran in a line north and south, trending the horizon. These showed free from any vegetation except the scrub growth at their base and the sand of them shone under the rays

of the rising sun like molten silver. In the foreground were the blue waters of the Sound now dimpling under the caressing touches of a gentle breeze. Here and there showed high lights from the whitecaps that stood out as souvenirs still of the storm that had passed. Off to the right of the small bay upon which the house was built, a tangled mass of evergreen shrubs offered a vivid note in the color scheme. These were the undergrowth of the huge forest trees, of which the limbs were almost hidden by the clinging wreaths of mistletoe.

The esthetic sense of Ethel was touched to the deeps by this vista of beauty roundabout. No wonder that the dwellers in this blessed region lived contented in youth, maturity, and old age. She wondered, rather, that anyone could be cross or ill tempered or evil in any way within the environment of a nature so benign.

She was reluctant when Miss Goodwin gently led her away from the panorama of beauty toward the more sordid pleasure of the breakfast table. As she went, Ethel offered a silent and most devout prayer of grat-

itude for her preservation and for the kindness she had received from Doctor Garnet and these strangers, whom just now she was very near to loving.

Had it not been for the wish to appease the anxiety of friends at home, Ethel would have been content to remain long in this wonder spot, among a people so simple, so different from those to whom she had been acustomed, who were so little acquainted with the manners and the fashions of a so-called higher society. But, breakfast over, she was the first to suggest that it were best to leave this remote settlement, with all its charms of scenery and the compelling attractiveness of its homely goodness. The nerve-racked Garnet also was anxious to depart. He had rested comparatively well after the excitement and strain of the previous day, and now to an eye not too critical he would have seemed quite normal. Yet, a certain wildness in the expression of his eyes had not wholly disappeared. Now that Ethel was herself again, she perceived that there was something radically wrong with the man. Naturally enough, she attributed this con-

dition on his part to the worry over her welfare, and she even experienced a feeling almost like remorse that she should thus unwittingly have been the cause of suffering on his part.

The Goodwins urged them to remain for a longer rest, but they abandoned their hospitable efforts when Ethel pointed out the necessity of at once relieving the anxiety of her friends concerning her safety. They provided, however, an ample amount of food to be carried by the voyagers, which would suffice them until they reached a town on the coast to the northward, and the entire family went down to the wharf to wish them Godspeed.

As the party approached the landing, the attention of all was called to Shrimp, who hitherto had been neglected. He came walking proudly along the beach toward them from the pier. When the physician explained that the rooster was a pet, the Squire hurried back to the house and returned quickly with a small package of corn. A moment later, the launch was again in motion, while those on shore waved their adieux with

handkerchiefs, to which Ethel replied in kind.

Ethel was eager in her praise for every member of the family that had shown them such kindness and hospitality.

"Oh, Doctor," she exclaimed, "just as soon as the new yacht is built, the very first cruise shall be a visit to this beautiful spot. Father must know these plain people who have been such life-savers to us. You, too, Doctor Garnet, shall be one of the party. We'll see if we can't devise some scheme by which to repay them for what they've done."

The physician made no reply. He seemed indeed to be wholly absorbed in meditation. But he aroused with a start from his reverie at the girl's next question.

"Doctor, you know a woman's inquisitiveness! Last night you bade me be patient, and said that after a while you would tell me the whole story of this unfortunate affair. Now, I simply must ask you just one question. Will you answer it?"

"I'll try, Miss Marion," was the answer, given with an air as nonchalant as he could assume.

"Where are the villains who took part in this affair? Did they go down with *The Isabel*, or did they escape, and are they still at large?"

Garnet looked the girl straight in the eye as he replied in a tone of the utmost sincerity.

"The arch-conspirator escaped. He is probably being hunted by the best detectives in the country. He is sure to be captured eventually, dead or alive."

"Thank you, Doctor," Ethel said gratefully. "And in proof of my thanks, I won't trouble you any more on this subject, which seems to worry and annoy you. Of course, I don't know what dreadful things you were obliged to go through with in order to save yourself and me from harm. Really, I'm not surprised that you don't wish to talk about it. But I do hope they catch the guilty man and punish him as he deserves—hang him, perhaps."

The physician winced at the innocent remark, and vouchsafed no reply.

The launch sped on and on. The wind increased in some degree during mid-forenoon, as is usual in southern waters at this season

of the year. But the little craft was staunchly built, and by taking advantage of the headlands she made fairly good progress.

Garnet was beginning to suffer again from lack of the drug. Ethel had not as yet seen him use the hypodermic needle, nor did he care to have her. But by rapid stages his desire reached such a point that he must either have the relief of morphia or go mad. Then his cunning brain suggested that it would be easy enough to deceive this guileless girl. So he boldly told her that he was in a highly nervous state and suffering as well from a splitting headache, and that, therefore, he deemed it advisable to take a small injection of morphia, which would undoubtedly relieve him.

Ethel had not the faintest idea that this learned man, of such eminence in his profession, was, in fact, a drug fiend. She had no suspicion of the truth even when she saw the point of the hypodermic syringe penetrate the skin of his forearm. She merely admired the graceful, deft movements of the long and slender fingers.

Nevertheless, the girl could hardly fail to

note the change that came almost immediately over the man. Now he became again his usual self, with little, if any, trace of nervousness, with the manner that was affable and sympathetic.

It was a half hour later when Ethel, ever alert, noticed a fisherman's boat laboring clumsily down the Sound. In years agone, it had been equipped with a sail, but now it chugged away industriously under the energy of a wheezing gasoline engine. There were several persons aboard—three men, two women and a baby in arms. During her first glance at the ungainly-looking boat, the beat of the engine ceased, and it was evident from the actions of the man who busied himself with the machinery that the motor had balked. As the launch drew nearer, the girl saw that those in the broken-down craft were in a state of consternation, with their attention centered on the child. She cried out in wonder to the Doctor.

"What in the world can be the matter in that boat? It must have something to do with the baby."

Garnet answered without hesitation.

"Yes, Miss Ethel, I've been watching, and there is certainly something seriously wrong. I'll go close enough to hail them."

The men in the fishing boat began to wave their hats as distress signals, and the Doctor nodded and raised his hand as a signal that he was coming.

When the launch came within hailing distance, one of the men shouted out an explanation. The propeller had become entangled in a piece of floating net, and so rendered useless. The party came from the Tournequin Bay section, where an epidemic of diphtheria was raging. This baby had not improved under the "granny" treatment of the neighborhood, in which there were no doctors. In consequence, it was now being taken to Beaufort to receive the antitoxin—that new remedy for which such miracles were claimed. Even as the man was speaking, the baby was seized with a fit of strangling that brought it almost to the point of death.

Came a transformation scene. Here was no longer Garnet, the crazed drug fiend. In his stead was revealed the man and the physician—he who in times of distress and suffering

had always given his services to the best of his ability. In this moment the old instinct rose dominant. He called to them in a loud clear voice.

"I am a physician. If you will permit me I'll come aboard and try to give temporary relief. Something must be done promptly, or the child will die."

In order to save Ethel as far as possible from any danger of contagion, Garnet brought the launch alongside the stern of the fishing boat, since the baby was in the bow. As he stepped aboard the other craft he bade one of the men let the launch drop back astern to full length of the painter. While this was being done, the physician, medicine case in hand, hurried to the child that lay struggling spasmodically in its mother's arms. An instant of examination showed to Garnet's practiced eyes that the throat was almost completely filled with the membrane characteristic of the disease, and that it must be only a matter of minutes before suffocation would ensue unless effective measures for relief were taken. A glance to the shore two miles away told him that the delay in reaching it would

prove fatal to his patient's chances. It was evident that if the baby's life were to be saved he must act—and act now. Nor did he hesitate. With lightning-like rapidity he took out his emergency kit of surgeons' tools. He bade the most intelligent-appearing of the men hold the child according to his precise directions. Then, with his coat off and shirt sleeves rolled up, Doctor Garnet braced himself in the tossing boat and performed the operation of tracheotomy, while the mother crouched weeping and praying with her face hidden in her hands.

Presently, the sufferer grew quiet, for now it was able to breathe again. Thanks to the great skill of this man, once again a life had been saved.

The parents of the child were profuse in the expressions of heartfelt gratitude. They would have given what little money they had to this savior of their child. But Garnet, of course, would take no fee for his services. He diverted the chorus of thanks by offering to take in tow the disabled fishing boat and bring it to the shore, whence means could be secured for their going on to Beaufort. He

insisted that in spite of what he had done, the baby should be taken to the town, in order to receive treatment with the antitoxin.

Throughout all the scene, Ethel had watched the physician with eyes in which shone pride and affection. It seemed to her that this man was one who fought always to relieve distress according to the best measure of his strength.

"He has succored me," she mused with a warm glow in her heart.

"He is taking me to my home—to Roy. He has stopped only long enough to rescue another sufferer from the jaws of death—even as he rescued me. He is a hero."

CHAPTER XV

Adrift with a Madman

THE afflicted child showed marked signs of improvement by the time *The Isabel's* tender, with its tow, reached the small hamlet of Atlantic—a cluster of fishermen's houses and two stores built on a bluff to the westerly side of Core Sound. There the disabled boat was pulled out upon the beach so that the stern was exposed and workmen could get at the injured shaft. The work of repair was simple. Soon the craft was restored to running condition, and its passengers went on their way, their hearts filled with new hopes for the safety of the child.

Ethel remained at the wharf, since the steep climb up the bluff must have proved too trying for her injured ankle. But the Doctor, acting under the girl's instructions,

made his way up the hillside to the stores in order to purchase for her some necessary apparel to replace that lost in the wreck. There was occasion also to buy additional gasoline for the launch. With these things provided, the two again set forth on their voyaging.

The physician, though he appeared genial enough, was in fact greatly perturbed. He had tried in vain to secure morphia at either of the stores in Atlantic. He took advantage of his absence from Ethel to administer another injection, so that for the present the craving was stilled. But he was filled with dread for the future. While the launch moved forward steadily through the calm water, he secretly counted again the pellets remaining in the vial. Heartsick, he realized the truth. It was a matter only of a few hours before his stock of the drug would be entirely exhausted. In such a situation, knowing as he did the horrible suffering that must ensue to him for lack of morphia, Garnet did not hesitate. He had learned by inquiries that there was a physician at Portsmouth, on the south side of Ocracoke

Inlet, at the extreme northerly end of Core Banks. He must direct the launch thither, there to seek relief from his fellow practitioner. There was even the possibility of whiskey to mitigate his torture, for as one of the natives had informed him in Atlantic, "No'th Caroliny wasn't plumb bone-dry."

For some time now, Ethel Marion had closely watched her companion. She could not but perceive how different was his manner from that of the man who, for years, had visited her father's house whenever medical aid was needed. Formerly he had been full of life and vigor; a man of most affable bearing, while now he was morose, almost diffident. Since her return to consciousness, she had not once seen a smile on his face. Instead, his expression was always abstracted and remote. Moreover, at times, the girl had seen him turn his face quickly to the south as if moved by some irresistible and baneful attraction. And, too, at such times he had shuddered visibly. Ethel felt convinced that there remained something very frightful in the story still to be told concern-

ing the wreck of the yacht. As she watched the man, a vague fear developed in her—a fear of him, for him. She had as yet no suspicion that she had been in mortal peril through the act of this man. But she was more than half convinced that he could be no longer a safe protector, for the peculiarity of his appearance and manner soon convinced her that he was actually deranged. It was evident that he desired to be left to his own musings. So, for a long time, she refrained from any attempt toward conversation. She even feigned sleep, but through the long, brown lashes she continued to study the worn and harassed visage before her. And it was during this period of sly observation that she detected his deft resort to the hypodermic syringe. She witnessed as well the febrile anxiety with which he once more inspected the number of pellets. She noted with dismay the horror in his drawn features as he stared at the vial. Her ears even caught his whispered words:

"Only two!"

But before the startled and apprehensive girl could formulate a conclusion as to the

significance of what she had seen and heard, there came an interruption.

In the spring great numbers of shad journey from the depths of the Atlantic to their spawning grounds far up in the head waters of the Neuse and Pamlico Rivers. The Sound fisherman is alert to know the time of their coming and stakes his gill nets all along the miles upon miles of shallows away from the buoy-marked channel of the Sound, in order that he may gain for himself the high prices paid in the northern markets for these delicacies of the sea. It is the rule that after the shad season the stakes to which the nets had been tied shall be removed. But sometimes carelessness, or worse, leaves the stakes in their places. In many instances these are broken off below the surface of the water by the buffeting of the waves. Thus invisible, they become a serious menace in the course of small boats. Sometimes in rough water, a boat falling from a wave has struck on one of these to have its bottom pierced, and forthwith to fill and sink.

It was one of these stakes that now caused catastrophe. The sloping stern scraped over

it. Next instant, the brittle bronze propeller blades rasped against it. They were swept off as smoothly as icicles from a window ledge, and the homeward cruise of the frail little tender was at an end.

There came a scream from Ethel, which was echoed by a groan from the physician as his thoughts went in despair to the two pellets—only two! It was with the mechanical action of the experienced yachtsman that he threw the throttle of the engine as it raced free from the propeller's resistance.

"Oh, Doctor," the girl cried, "what is it now? What has happened to us—"

"Our propeller blades are stripped, Miss Marion," he answered, in a tone of deep dejection. "There is no injury to the hull, of course, or we would have taken in water already. There is no danger, but," he concluded with great bitterness, "it is very discouraging, I must admit."

"What shall we do, Doctor?—drift with the wind until we are picked up by some passing vessel?"

"I think not, Miss Ethel," Garnet replied. "Judging from the direction of the breeze, in

less than an hour we shall come on the shore of Core Banks."

He spoke in a new voice of gentleness as he continued:

"Pray do not worry. I don't believe there is an acre of water that we will pass over where the depth would be above our arm-pits."

The thought of being stranded upon the barren Core Banks would have been serious enough to awaken dread in the heart of any woman, even in the company of a sane person. But Ethel Marion had her distress instantly increased by the fact that the man with her was of unsound mind. She had a general idea of how far they would be distant from any human habitation. This very strip of sand had been pointed out to her many times by the local pilot aboard her father's yacht. Now, there came crashing into her tortured brain memories of tales told by that same pilot; concerning treasure secreted there years agone by the pirate Black Beard; concerning the weird lights that rose from the sands at night, then mysteriously vanished; concerning the evil beach-combers who burned here their flares to trick the skippers of ships

out at sea and deliver them to death upon these sands, where the bones of the vessels might be picked at ease; concerning the utter isolation of this region, where no human beings were to be found short of Portsmouth at one end and Cape Lookout at the other—fifty miles apart.

The launch drifted slowly, but none the less surely, toward the strip of sterile bleakness broken only by the huddled masses of the dunes. As she saw them that morning from the porch of Squire Goodwin's home, Ethel had thought them a splendid and inspiring spectacle. Now, under the changed circumstances, their nearer aspect terrified her. She felt a desperate wonder as to what fate might hold in store.

By a mighty effort of will, the girl forced back the fear that threatened to overcome her. She addressed Garnet in a voice that trembled only slightly.

"Would it not be better to drop the anchor, and remain out here where we could surely be seen by passing boats?"

The Doctor shook his head in negation as he answered:

"No, Miss Ethel. It would be of no use, for we are too far from the traveled route. Besides, you have been so long cramped up aboard this little boat that it's imperative that you should stretch yourself ashore. As far as the fishermen are concerned, we can make signals to them on shore as well as from here, better in fact."

He pointed suddenly.

"I can make out a rough fisherman's shack over younder between the dunes. There's no chance of its being occupied at this season, but the shelter afforded by it will mean everything to you."

Ethel looked in the direction indicated.

"Oh, yes, Doctor, I see it. I suppose it would help in an emergency, but I do hope we shall not be compelled to pass a night in this desolate place."

The physician's voice was surcharged with gloom—perhaps from pity for himself rather than for her—as he replied.

"It's already near sundown, so I'm greatly afraid we must pass at least a night in this wretched place. There is just one chance. Should the wind veer a little further to the

southward, I could possibly use a pole and so push the boat up along the shore toward Portsmouth. But while the breeze remains in its present quarter, we have no choice but to stay here marooned. I only wish we had taken on more supplies at Atlantic. Should I be obliged to go on foot to Portsmouth in order to bring back a boat for you, a collection of canned goods would prove capital company for you during my absence."

Ethel regarded the physician with surprise, and a tremulous smile bent her lips, for this was his first and only attempt at humor throughout all the trip. But as she studied his face, with its lugubrious expression, she came to the conclusion that, after all, he had not in the least meant to be funny; had, on the contrary, spoken in all seriousness.

Presently, the waves bore the tender gently upon the shelving strip of sand. Ethel remained on board, while Garnet went to make an inspection of the hut.

Shrimp, too, hurriedly hopped from the tiny deck forward, and when he found himself safe ashore expressed his gratification by a lusty crow—his first during the voyage.

Garnet found the accommodations far better than he could have expected. The shack contained a small cook-stove, cooking utensils, clean bunks, some chairs and a table. He returned and aided Ethel to disembark. Then, still holding her hand, he led her toward the shack.

She went in a mood of dire foreboding toward this miserable shelter, under the escort of a man whom she now knew to be crazed.

CHAPTER XVI

The Coming-out Party

AS Captain Ichabod left the physician's house after having made his confession, Doctor Hudson stood watching him while he walked briskly away.

"See how that old devil is stepping it off down the street like a four-year-old," was the observer's comment. "He really has taken on a new lease of life, and materia medica didn't have a finger in the pie, either. If it had happened a few years earlier that he had a chance to tell Sandy Mason what he thought of him, and to save a woman from drowning, likely as not there'd have been a wife and children on the Island to-day to cheer the old fellow's declining years. It's a shame that cat of a woman ever crossed his path, for he's one of the best-meaning, greatest-hearted men in the county."

Suddenly, the Doctor chuckled.

"By George, I have an idea, and I'll get busy on it. Yes, sir, I'll take the old rascal at his word." With that, Doctor Hudson disappeared inside his house and shut the door after him.

The government wireless station at Beaufort is built upon an island, which is separated from the mainland by the narrow channel of New Port River just before it empties into the sea. Now, Captain Jones went at once to the government wharf, where he secured the services of a small boy to row him to the island. On his arrival, he was warmly welcomed, for he was as popular there as with the men of the coast guard. As he entered the small receiving-room, the instruments were spitting out dots and dashes, with all kinds of sparks for accompaniment. The principal operator was taking down a message. As soon as the task was ended, he whirled about and greeted the old fisherman enthusiastically.

"Why, howdy, Captain Ichabod—glad to see you. It's sure fine of you to come over. I understand there've been some exciting

times up in your neck of the woods. By the way, what was the name of the yacht that went on the rock?"

"It was *The Isabel*, of New York," replied Ichabod.

"Is that so!" exclaimed the operator. "If that's the case, I reckon this message I just yanked out of the air will be of interest to you."

He handed the paper to the Captain, who, after finding his spectacles and adjusting them carefully, read aloud the following:

"To all port officers:

Motor-driven yacht *Isabel* of New York, put to sea without clearance papers. Investigation shows she was probably stolen. Daughter of owner a prisoner on board. If located in your vicinity arrest boat and all members of crew. Make diligent search for young woman and release her.

The bulletin was signed by an officer of the Treasury Department.

"We'll I'll be doggoned!" cried the Captain, in great astonishment. "I knowed that feller was some kind o' a bad egg, but now I believe to goodness he was plumb sp'ilt. That poor

little brown-eyed gal! What a pity! I wish I'd a held right smack onto her—that I do."

"I suppose," the operator rejoined, "that bulletin has been picked up by all of the stations, so that the boys are keepin' a sharp lookout to overhaul the yacht and pinch the bunch, an' especially to save the girl. I'll get this over to the Collector of Customs right away. He'll want to report the escape of the man and woman and to give the direction they went."

"Ye'd better tell him to mention the dead feller, an' that he was tied down."

"That's right, Uncle Ichabod. Say, but there's a lot of mystery about this affair. I'll bet my boots you haven't heard the last of it."

"Maybe not," the fisherman admitted. "But, by cracky, since what I've been through a'ready they can't skeer Ichabod. No, not by a damned sight!"

It was very seldom that Captain Jones used a profane expression. When he did, it was with deliberate intention.

Upon this island where the wireless outfit is stationed, the government has another institu-

tion—a laboratory where studies are made in sea life. It includes a remarkable museum, which is visited by students from far and near. There are power boats equipped for dredging at considerable depth in order to bring to light the secret things of the sea. Many of the curios are contributed by the fishermen, who are continually dragging forth in their nets objects strange to them. When a thing of real rarity is brought to the laboratory, a snug sum is paid to the finder. The Captain himself had always a ready eye for anything that might prove of value, and his finds from time to time netted him a tidy profit. To-day he had with him a variety of sea porcupine new to him, which he had found in his net a few days before. So now, on leaving the wireless station, Ichabod visited the laboratory, where the sea porcupine was duly delivered and brought in return a satisfactory sum of money. Here, too, he retold once again all his experiences in connection with the wreck of *The Isabel*. By the time this was done, the afternoon was well spent. The old man was rowed back to the mainland, where he entered the red skiff and set sail homeward.

As he passed up the bay, the tide was low, so that in many places the shoals and rocks were exposed. Captain Ichabod, reclining lazily in the stern sheets of the skiff, tiller in hand, listened to the noisy clatter of the gulls, which in vast swarms were feeding on their favorite scallops.

Ages ago, the gulls discovered that the fluted shell must be broken ere the luscious morsel within could be obtained. It was wholly impossible for them to crush the stonelike casing with their bills. So the birds devised another means. This was to carry the shell high aloft, then drop it on the shoals. If it fell on a hard surface, it would be broken open, and the scallop within would be promptly devoured by the gull following. When the shell fell in a soft place, and remained unbroken the bird would merely continue its efforts until finally crowned with success. Ichabod, idly watching such repeated trials, was induced to meditation on the lesson thus taught.

"It shore is a pity that arter Roxana Lee" —the name came easily now—"arter a-stabbin' o' me in the back—yes, it's a pity

that I didn't do sort o' like that Scotch feller that watched the spider try an' try an' try ag'in till at last he spun his web whar he aimed to. Why, when he saw what that-thar crab-lookin' son-of-a-gun could do, he jumped right up, an', a-bucklin' himself around a leetle tighter, went out and cleaned up a whole mess that was arter him. By cracky! all I had to do was to come right out to these sand shoals an' oyster rocks an' watch them noisy gulls a-tryin' an' a-tryin', an' at last bustin' a scallop. I jest believe, if I'd done that, then I'd have got right square up an' licked Sandy Mason, an' told Roxana what I thought o' her no-'countness, an' then I might have married the best-lookin' woman in Cartaret County.

"But, then, what's the use?" he continued, as he drew the sheet in a little closer, so holding the skiff more into the wind, in order to round a point of marsh land. "That's ancient history, an' I ain't a-goin' to study it. I've done turned over a new leaf. I hope, Ichabod, ye'll live right an' die happy."

The skiff was nearing the home port. Cap-

tain Ichabod's attention was called to a sound of happy voices—women's notes, as he expressed it. Unless he was much mistaken, it came from his own Island.

The old fisherman, true to his instinct of fear in reference to womankind, loosened the sheet, so that the skiff might slide by and let him learn more definitely what might be the meaning of this invasion.

The matter was not long in doubt. As he rounded a point, he saw them. It seemed to him there were a dozen or more of women. They were not only upon the Island: the shack door stood open. There were women actually going in and out through the entrance—busy as bees. . . . Upon the shore, a great fire was burning.

Ichabod, who had been brave for three days, now began to be afraid of this influx of feminine furbelows—this show of skirts. Twice Ichabod tacked with a desire to take a running look at his own Island; and twice he dared not make a landing because of the feminine contingent on shore. But, when he sailed the red skiff by his homeland for the third time, he recognized a pudgy figure on

the shore, which was waving frantically toward him.

"Oh, hell!" Ichabod spoke, with great indignation. "If it ain't Hudson! Consarn him, he has took me at my word an' if he hain't brought a flock o' 'em! I didn't aim to run away, nohow. I jest forgot fer a minute thet I had reformed. I wonder what the fire means? It's mighty early yet for an oyster roast, but they are a-gittin' fat."

The Doctor met the old fellow at the landing. Ichabod wore a sheepish look, while, on the contrary, the physician's good-natured face was wreathed in smiles.

"Throw me your painter, Captain!" shouted the medical man. "When I get that in hand I'll feel sure that you are really here!"

Old Icky went forward, wound the sail neatly around the mast, removed the rudder, pulled up the center-board, and then tossed to Hudson a line to be turned around the piling. Ichabod stepped ashore, nonplused. His expression was stern and forbidding as he advanced on his friend, the Doctor, and demanded the meaning of all this.

"Why, Captain Ichabod," came the answer, "the women folks up there have named this meeting Ichabod Jones' coming-out party. You know in great cities where there's a heap of society, when a girl reaches an age that they think it is time for her to be setting her cap, they arrange a swell party to let the fellows know that the young lady is eligible. So, you see, that's the case to-day. Only, this time, it's a man that has come out of his shell, and you can believe me that shell was the hardest one I ever tried to crack!"

"Say, Hudson, did I tell ye I was a-lookin' fer a woman? No, sir; I only said as how they was welcome to come to the Island. This how-dy-do o' your'n I call a-rubbin' it in pretty hard. If it's a joke with you, it hain't with me."

"Now, old friend, don't get peeved. I'll tell you just how it came about. After you left my house, I went out to pay some professional calls. Ichabod, your name's in everybody's mouth. They all asked questions about you, knowing how close friends we are. What could I do but just up and tell

how you had seen the light and had hit the trail for happiness; how all women were to be welcome at the Island from now on, and how the latch-string would be hanging always on the outside of the shack door? I had no sooner arrived home than one of these good ladies called me up and asked me if I would mind escorting a few of them to the Island to congratulate you on your quitting playing Rip Van Winkle as far as women were concerned. I just told the pretty creatures I'd be only too glad to go with them. . . . Shake hands, Ichabod. Let your family physician be the first to welcome you back."

Realizing that the whole trouble had been caused by his talking too much and that no one was to blame save himself, the old man smiled somewhat wryly as he grasped his friend's extended hand.

"Say, Doc," he declared, "I always did like a joke where it didn't hurt none. So, I ain't a-goin' to make ye out untruthful to that passal o' women."

With that, the fisherman slipped his arm within the Doctor's, and walked forward spiritedly toward his doom—as he mentally

termed this social ordeal. It was indeed his coming-out party, and never a débutante so secretly tremulous and shy as Captain Icky.

CHAPTER XVII

Strangers at Ichabod's Island

THE friendly squeeze that Doctor Hudson was giving Ichabod's arm as they advanced toward the group of women heartened the old man mightily. A few days since, he would have felt that he was being led as a martyr to be burned at the stake. But now, in the twinkling of an eye, everything was changed. It is true that he felt a keen embarrassment over this introduction to feminine society after his isolation from it for twenty years. Yet his natural courage dominated this embarrassment, so that he faced the trial bravely enough.

The Doctor explained to him that a formal introduction to the ladies would be necessary.

"That is," Hudson continued, "to all except one. You are already acquainted with the one just now coming out of the shack door with your vinegar bottle in her hand.

It's Miss Sarah Porter that I'm referring to. She has told me that you have talked with her on more than one occasion about your domestic troubles and your lonely life. She has told me, too, that she tried her best to give you advice that would be good for you."

Ichabod replied defensively.

"Wall, I cal'late I've been a-tryin' to take her advice!"

It was even as Doctor Hudson had said. In spite of the sharp eyes and wagging tongues of the townsfolk, few had known that the old fisherman occasionally visited Miss Porter in the hostelry managed by her for many years, and that there he had listened gratefully to her words of kindly admonition. As a matter of fact, long before the Lee woman entered into the fisherman's life, he had felt very kindly toward Miss Porter, and his attentions had been well received by her. It is very possible that he might have offered himself to her years ago, had it not been for a conscientious scruple as to his jilted self being unworthy. So, he saw her only at rare intervals, and then only when he brought fish to sell, thus making business his excuse. There

had been to him a certain comfort in the fact that this vivacious woman of sixty had never married. He even dared to wonder sometimes with a thrill of vanity if her feeling toward him could have been the cause of her spinsterhood. And this was always followed by an emotion of disgust with himself that he should ever have found the company of Roxana more to his liking than that of the pleasant and wholesome Sarah.

When the Captain saw Miss Porter with the vinegar bottle in her hand, he knew that the visitors were preparing an oyster roast, which, of course, accounted for the fire of twigs and seaweed. Now, the other women stood in a row, while Sarah, her face wreathed in smiles, came forward to greet her old lover. This done, she formally presented Ichabod to the other guests. The fisherman's increased embarrassment expressed itself in a sheepish grin, when it suddenly dawned on him that every one of the women there before him was unmarried. Dr. Hudson remarked afterward that Ichabod looked to him as if he were convinced that each and every one was "after him!"

Nevertheless, once the introductions were over, the Captain found himself at ease in a manner quite surprising. Every one of the visitors seemed to enter into the spirit of the affair with a whole-hearted geniality that was infectious, and under this benignant influence the host was filled with an unaccustomed happiness. He at once began to assist in the roasting of the oysters, which the women had gathered from the rocks. He gave them carte blanche to help themselves to plates and forks and such other things as were needful from the shack.

None was so rude as to refer to Ichabod's reformation. But Sarah Porter, whenever she caught his eye, gave him a look that spoke as plainly as words:

"Ichabod Jones, at last I have found you a man, and I am proud of you!"

No doubt she congratulated herself, with justice, on the fact that her talks with him had had much to do with this change. She was the only one in the party of mature age; the others were comparatively young and sprightly maidens. This selection of guests was due to the fine Italian hand of the Doc-

tor. Evidently, he was hard at work on a plan to make Ichabod Jones a provider, rather than trying to find him a place as housekeeper, in accordance with the fisherman's original request.

The hours passed delightfully for all—especially for the host whose pleasure was edged by the novelty of the situation in which he found himself. It was not until the moon showed in the east that the visitors made ready for departure. Just before the party embarked, the boldest of the maidens kissed the old man's weather-beaten cheek. There was a burst of laughter from the onlookers. Ichabod could feel himself blushing furiously, but that blush was invisible under the deep tan. Then the others thus saluted him, one by one—all save Sarah Porter.

She bestowed herself in the launch while the kissing was going on, and Ichabod, regarding her furtively with anxious eyes, read in her expression signs of strong disapproval, which disconcerted him hugely, and robbed him in great measure of his just due of enjoyment under the osculatory attack.

Then, it was all over! The old man stood

waving his hat mechanically as the launch glided away. Ichabod watched with unseeing eyes. He was in a daze, thinking more in sorrow than in anger of "how fer he had let them minxes go with him—an' Sary a-lookin' on, too!" He shook his head despondently, as he reflected that the closing incident would have been more agreeable if "Sary hadn't been a-lookin' on."

Once more, Ichabod Jones burned midnight oil. In the early evening he brought his easy chair out in front, where he could see the glistening waters and watch the moon climb high. He smoked pipeful after pipeful of his strong tobacco. Again he made rings, and thought, and wondered. It was after ten before he arose and went into the shack, lighted his oil lamp, laid out his paper and pencil, and proceeded to add more to the record that he had started. No doubt, after his long reverie in the moonlight, he had come to the conclusion that the fact of his being kissed by ten young women and having one more making eyes at him in one day, the first of his reformation, was of moment enough to be recorded.

That night, as Ichabod finished his entry in the diary and leaned far back in his chair with chest expanded, his chin with its whift of beard thrown out at an angle of forty-five degrees, he reminded one of a cartoon of Uncle Sam when showing a self-satisfied air. The picture he portrayed at least conveyed the impression that he was monarch of all he surveyed and even dared once again to place his battle flag of conquest on the mainland of Cartaret County.

As he put away his writing materials and prepared to retire to his lonely bunk, he again talked aloud.

"It looks to me, by cracky, as if things was a-movin' jest a leetle too rapid fer a starter. It reminds me right smart o' a hoss race I saw at the fish and oyster fair, at New Bern, a spell back. The animal that I cal'lated would win, he jest started off like a steam engine, an' when he got half way around he was clean ahead o' the bunch. But by the time he reached the home-stretch, he was a swettin' like a mad bull an' puffin' like a grampus—an' every other hoss got in fust. Here I am now, kissed by ten o' the prettiest

gals in Beaufort jest as the sun is a-settin' on my first day o' new manhood. I'm startin' too almighty fast. If I don't tame down I'll lose out on the home-stretch. I opine Sara didn't like the idea o' that kissin' business. I was particular to hold my face straight out where she could see it an' not let my lips tech nary one o' 'em. But I guess it would be safer to go down an' tell Sara how partic'lar I was, an' how I wanted to tell 'em to stop, but didn't dar'st not to be polite."

As Captain Ichabod lay in his bunk before falling asleep, he allowed his mind to dwell upon more serious things. He thought of the wireless message. What had become of the strange man, of the woman, and of his rooster, Shrimp? He wondered that there were no reports of their passing other boats. His heart was sore for that poor woman who had lain so long unconscious upon his bed. His interest in her was vital, for he had saved her life. What could the man mean by thus secretly hurrying away? Ichabod had asked himself this question many times. Now he knew beyond peradventure of doubt that the

fellow was a criminal, a refugee from justice, with a young woman of gentle birth in his power.

Ichabod's conscience smote him. He was ashamed that he had not instituted a search immediately after the fellow's disappearance from the Island. He had had the right to call on the Sheriff of the county for aid. There had been plain theft. A pair of blankets had been stolen from him—as also his chanticleer.

The monetary loss from this robbery meant nothing to the fisherman, but it would have served as an excuse for arresting the man, and thus rescuing his girl victim. . . . Ichabod remembered the man chained to the engine in the sunken yacht. It was doubtless this murderer who now had the girl in his power. Should it suit his ends, would that desperate man hesitate to murder even the girl herself—the girl he had saved from drowning? Ichabod decided that he would fulfill a belated duty by going to town next day, there to swear out a warrant of arrest against the abductor of the girl, that thus the Sheriff should have reason to search the waters

of the Sound in the hope of arresting the guilty man and rescuing his victim. . . .

Despite the thrilling experiences of a day so unaccustomedly feminine, the sturdy old fisherman, when he was done with his meditations, slept soundly throughout the night. He was up at cock-crow—though there was no clarion call from Shrimp to awaken.

It was while he was busy over the preparation of a modest breakfast that there came the wailing cry of a yacht's siren. It sounded from the northward, evidently not far away from the Island. Captain Icky shut the drafts on the stove, pushed the coffee-pot back to a position where it would keep hot without boiling. Then he stepped outside the shack to watch the incoming vessel pass over the bar into the waters of the Inlet. He was impressed at first glance by the beautiful lines of the little vessel, which was evidently of light draft so she might cruise safely in shallow waters, while capable of weathering a storm-tossed sea.

It was a new thing that a yacht of such size should come to anchor off the Island. Ichabod watched curiously as the vessel slackened

heavily and then let a light anchor drop from the starboard side of the bow. Presently, he saw a small boat put off from the yacht, rowed by two sailors, and carrying two passengers in the stern. When he made sure that a landing was intended, Ichabod went down to the point to greet the unexpected visitors.

As the boat touched the landing, the two men stepped ashore and advanced toward Ichabod, who greeted them hospitably.

"Howdy, men! Ye are welcome to Ichabod's Island. But it's a leetle unusual to have a call from boats o' your class. . . . Jones is my name—Captain Ichabod Jones, at your service!"

The shorter man stepped forward, and introduced himself as Jack Scott. He presented his companion as his friend, Roy Morton.

"Captain Jones," the stranger began, "we are now, I take it, just at the entrance to the Beaufort Inlet."

"Yes, yender is the Inlet," Ichabod replied.

The other spoke with curt incisiveness.

"We're in a hurry. We'd like to ask you a few questions. It's plain no craft of any size could pass your Island without attracting

notice. We're looking for a yacht stolen from her anchorage in the North River. She has now been missing for several days. The last report we've been able to get is that she was seen passing out of Pamlico into Core Sound. Do you know the whereabouts of any such boat? Her name was *The Isabel.*

"*The Isabel!*" Ichabod answered. "Thar she lays!"

The two men followed the direction of the horny hand—and saw! Roy Morton felt a sick dizziness crash upon him. In that moment of agony, he believed that the girl he loved was forever lost.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Call of the Dark

A FEW handfuls of sea water dashed into Roy's face by Ichabod, together with a rough massage by Van Dusen, soon brought the young man around again.

"I must have the truth," he declared, "no matter how terrible. Was the young woman lost?"

"Why, no, young man," the fisherman answered; "least-wise, not in the wreck. I took her out o' the water myself. She was plumb full o' swallered brine, but I had that out o' her in a jiffy. I took her into my shack an' got her all right exceptin' her haid. Poor thing never did speak to me but once."

"Then she died!" Roy cried, in a tone of anguish.

But Ichabod shook his head emphatically.

"Not as I knows on," he declared; "unless that nervous-actin' skunk has killed her

since he took her away in the small boat. Had I knowed what I l'arned yesterday at the wireless station, I'd 'a' held on to the gal. I saw she was pretty bad, not bein' able to talk, an' so I told the man I took off o' the wreck that what she needed was an M.D. Leavin' him in charge, fer he seemed to know a heap about medicine himself, I put the rag on the skiff, an' sailed to town fer the Doctor. When I got back, I found that the thievin' rascal had stole my pet rooster, a pair o' blankets—an' the woman, an' had gone off in the gasoline tender what come ashore from the wreck. O' course, they went up the Sound—to God knows whar! The woman ain't safe with no sich critter as that feller. If the gal is much to you, which I 'lows she is from your tantrums, ye had best make all haste to git her. I was jest a-fixin' to go to Beaufort an' take out a warrant fer the feller fer murder, an' charter a gasoline boat, prepared to go through hell if need be to save that gal an' put the sallow-skinned varmint, what took her, behind the bars o' the county jail."

"Warrant for murder?" Van Dusen de-

manded, suddenly alert, "What do you mean, Captain Jones? Has this man killed some one?"

"Wall, I reckin!" Ichabod answered grimly. "Thar was a feller a-sailin' around the wreck o' *The Isabel*, which, as ye see, is all busted to pieces by an explosion after she struck an' the beatin' on her o' the big storm waves. When this feller looked down by the engine, he saw a dead man a-lookin' back up at him. He looked closter before he hurried away, an' saw that the poor devil was chained to the wreck. Now, that bein' the case, an' this feller that's got the gal bein' the man in charge o' the yacht, then why *ain't* he wanted for murder?"

Van Dusen nodded his head understandingly.

"This clears up part of the mystery," he said to Roy. "Now, if we can only catch Garnet and save Miss Marion, the case will be happily ended. The whole thing is clear in my mind, but we have still to find the proof."

"Them's the names the feller give me," the fisherman vouchsafed, "when he intro-

duced himself to me. I 'lowed he was 'most crazy from his scare. Say, men! Do you know I think that feller was a-takin' dope, an', furthermore, since I've had time to think it over, I'm almost certain I saw him puttin' some under the gal's skin. As folks around here only use Baitman Drops or swallers pills, I took a spot on the gal's arm fer a skeeter bump. I didn't know what the shiny thing was that he slipped in his pocket when he saw me a-lookin'. Since then the Doctor has told me he 'lowed it was a hypodermic. First he called it a gun, but when he discovered that I thought he meant a shootin' iron, because I said it was too small fer that, why, then he give me the other name. O' course, I had heard that other name afore."

"This whole business is goin' to turn out just as I outlined it to you, Roy," Van Dusen asserted. "These things are unusual, but I don't think you need have any fears for Miss Marion, provided she doesn't starve, or meet with some accident through the foolhardiness of this crazy Garnet. The thing I suggest is to solicit the aid of Captain Jones, and have him act as our pilot. We should also charter

several small gasoline boats and go through the waters of this shallow Sound and its tributaries like a fine-toothed comb. It's haste now that is important. We'll probably find the fellow hidden away in some remote fisherman's home where he can administer to the wants of his patient, while avoiding capture. I believe that he is, even though deranged, terrorized at the thought of arrest, so that he will not dare come out into the open. That's the reason he left the comfortable quarters of the Island."

Roy was all eagerness to begin the work forthwith, and Ichabod proffered all the assistance in his power.

"Jest a minute, men," he said, "till I swaller my coffee an' put out the fire, then Ichabod Jones will be ready to show ye every nook an' corner o' these-here waters; an' if that skunk ain't got out of 'em or gone to the bottom, we'll git him—an' git him right!"

After leaving Norfolk, *The Hialdo* had covered many miles. Arthur Van Dusen when he acted, moved with deliberation as well as speed. Already, on the way down,

every avenue of escape had been blocked. It would have been impossible for *The Isabel* to escape over the route by which the pursuers had come. She would have been seized the moment she showed at any port. The thoroughness of these precautionary measures was the reason why it was not until now that *The Hialdo* had dropped anchor at Beaufort Inlet.

The only area that remained unsearched was the Core Sound section. The searchers had taken advantage of the night, when there was little else that they could do, to run down to the Inlet in order to find out if the yacht had passed out to sea through the channel.

They were reasonably certain now that the Doctor and the young woman were not a great way off. Van Dusen was confident of speedily running down the culprit, and he was exultant over the prospect. But Roy was still tortured with anxiety concerning the safety of the girl he loved.

Before coming out of the shack to go aboard *The Hialdo*, Ichabod took time to tidy up his person a little. This, for the

sufficient reason that they were going first to Beaufort, where it might be that he would encounter Sarah Porter. It would never do for her to see him except properly "spruced up" for a trip to town. There was, in addition, the fact that he was about to go aboard a handsome yacht, where, as he knew, everybody went about habitually "dressed up." As he took a parting glance into his tiny bit of mirror, the old fisherman indulged in a self-satisfied smirk, and spoke aloud.

"I'd be willin' to bet that when them fine fellers gits to be as old as me, they can't tell as how ten single women kissed 'em all in one day, an' another one, by cracky, made eyes an' jest didn't darst!"

Having thus said, Ichabod hurried off to his visitors, and a minute later was following them up the ladder to the deck of *The Hialdo*. Van Dusen had taken on a pilot at Ocracoke, so that they had no trouble in following the intricate roundabout ship's channel to the town.

Captain Ichabod directed the place of anchorage. This was in the small channel

directly in front of the Inlet Hotel, where Sarah Porter reigned supreme. They would use her wharf in going ashore. He admitted to himself that he had been pleased over being kissed by the "young fry"; but he also admitted that the chief appeal to him had been made by the elderly woman who had looked on so disapprovingly from her place in the Doctor's launch.

Van Dusen was anxious to call first upon the Collector of the Port. That office here had become, of late years, rather unimportant, since the action of the tides had filled the Inlet with sand, to such an extent that very few vessels of the ocean-going steamer type could get over the bar. The Collector's business was confined to seeing that yachts and other vessels of small draft had their proper papers. There was no United States Marshal located in the town, and the case of *The Isabel* was plainly one to be handled by the Treasury Department.

It was unnecessary for Ichabod to guide the detective further than the wharf, for the Custom House, with its identifying flag, stood near the landing. So, the Captain felt

himself at liberty to visit the hotel, where he reclined at ease in a rocking chair on the porch, and enjoyed an intermittent conversation with the hostess of the inn. Roy remained on board the yacht, at his friend's bidding, in order to recover from the shock he had suffered on hearing Ichabod's story.

Van Dusen found the Collector anxious to be of service in every possible way. He suggested that the services of the Sheriff should be enlisted, and that a warrant for the arrest of Doctor Garnet should be secured from the Justice of the Peace, for robbery, to be sworn to by Ichabod, since that offense had been committed within the jurisdiction of the state courts.

The Sheriff, when called up over the telephone, agreed to supply three deputies, each equipped with a copy of the warrant. Finally, two small launches, each carrying one of the Sheriff's men, were chartered to voyage in different directions for the search, while the third would go aboard *The Hialdo*. Other business prevented the Sheriff from giving his personal aid in the quest. Ichabod was interrupted during his pleasuring

on the porch by a telephone call, which requested him to report at once to Squire Chadwick's office in order to swear to the necessary papers.

But the fisherman forgot the imperative summons as his hostess came out on the porch to bid him farewell.

"Do ye realize, Sarah Porter, that this is the very fust time in over twenty year that I've come to your house except on business, without some fishes, terrapin, scallops, or sich to sell fer the hotel?"

Miss Porter blushed like a girl.

"Well, seein' as how you mention it, I reckon it's a fact." Her manner did not betray how often she had wondered, and perhaps grieved, over that fact during the score of years.

Then, Ichabod at last took heart of courage, and spoke boldly:

"This time, Sarah, arter due deliberation, an' study, Ichabod has come to ye to give something away. Tain't nothin' that comes out o' these waters or sands or marshes. Tain't gold, nor yit silver, but somethin' that nobody in all these years could 'a'

bought, had they tried. Could ye guess what it mout be, Sarah?"

There came a certain dreaminess into the woman's eyes, which, if a little dimmed, had by no means lost their luster.

"I never was good at guessing, Ichabod," she said simply. "I cal'late you'll jest have to tell me. I know from the way you speak that it must be something perfectly splendid."

"Wall, now, you may think it more wuthless than plain seaweed, an' if ye do, why ye must speak right out, Sarah. What I have come to offer ye is Ichabod Jones' love!"

Ichabod waited through a full minute for the answer that failed to come. The woman's eyes were gazing out over the broad expanse of the Atlantic, which opened so gloriously before them. He took one of her hands in his, and pressed it gently as he went on speaking.

"It's true that I'm some old, but I ain't crippled. An' arter all these years o'—yes, oh, hell!—I want to be loved ag'in. Sarah, I'll tell ye, an' it's God's truth, I never did

love that triflin' woman. I have come to that idea arter a long time o' thinkin'. I was young, an' I thought I loved her, but, Sarah, I just had my haid turned. Time is now tellin' my true feelin's."

Still the woman made no answer, but her very silence gave encouragement to the wooer.

"I'm through with fishin' an' lonely livin', whether or no, Sarah. All these years that I've hung around alone, it hain't cost me much to live, an' I've got a right smart o' money saved up. Ye know, this hotel ain't big 'nough fer all the Yankees that'd like to stop on the way up an' down offen their yachts. I was a-thinkin' las' night what a thing it'd be for me an' you to be real partners, an' let me spend some o' the savin's to double the size o' the hotel, an' hire 'nough help to take the strain offen you in runnin' o' it."

The mingling of romance and practical worldly advantage won Miss Porter's consent to the plea of her suitor. Perhaps, either would have sufficed of itself; certainly, together, they were irresistible. Ich-

abod was all a-tremble with happiness and pride, as the spinster coyly offered her cheek to his kiss.

He started guiltily a moment later, as a huge negress appeared in the doorway, and bawled at him:

"Mr. Ichabod, the 'phone is a-callin' yoh-all."

CHAPTER XIX

Bottled Up

CAPTAIN ICHABOD JONES stepped briskly into Squire Chadwick's court-room—which was otherwise the parlor in his modest home. Van Dusen, that very shrewd detective, observed that the old man trod with a jauntier step than heretofore, and that his expression was one of smug complacency. He wondered a little as to just what might have occurred to make this change so swiftly. He could not guess that a romance of twenty years was concerned, but his observant eyes told him that in some mysterious fashion this aged native had found a new happiness in life within the hour.

That happiness indeed was a thing assured in the opinion of Captain Ichabod. The smile that Van Dusen found so hard to interpret was the outward expression of

great things within the old man's soul. He had loved his loneliness. Now, he was rejoicing that no more would his life be lonely! The gulls and fish-hawks and sand-crabs could take possession of the old shack that had sheltered him for years. He cared nothing for that. Shortly, he would be known as Ichabod Jones, proprietor of a fashionable tourist hotel. He chuckled, and his lips moved into the travesty of a kiss.

"I'm a-sayin' good-bye to that-thar hermit o' Captain Icky's Island, what lived thar fer twenty year. He hain't a-goin' to live thar no more."

The warrant was speedily signed and duly sworn to, after which Van Dusen and Captain Jones hurried to board the yacht. The two chartered motor boats arrived. Since *The Hialdo* had the legs of the others, it took both in tow to bring them to the point whereat the search was to start. On reaching the Island, the red skiff also was taken in tow at Ichabod's suggestion, since its draft would permit it to penetrate shallows impenetrable to the other craft.

At a point midway between Harker's

Island and Smyrna, Uncle Ichabod directed that one of the chartered boats should be sent over and along the shores of the Island, then to proceed up the Banks shore, but not so far as to prevent the deputy from covering the southerly section of Core Sound with his field-glasses in order to detect any attempt to retrace the route by the Doctor in the tender. This launch having been dispatched, *The Hialdo* resumed her course, with the other boats still in tow.

The next objective in the cruise was Atlantic—a long way up the Sound. Thence, it was the intention to send the other chartered boat back along the westerly shore, with instructions to go into every inlet and cove and bay, no matter how small, provided they could navigate it, there to make diligent inquiry of every person seen on the shores.

Van Dusen had already prepared reward notices, offering five thousand dollars for the safe return of Ethel Marion, and one thousand dollars for the capture of her abductor. These posters were given to the deputies with instructions that they should be posted

in every fishing hamlet. It was the belief of the detective that the effect of these would be to send out a swarm of fishing boats to search every nook and cranny of the territory.

Before turning in from the main channel to the pier at Atlantic, Van Dusen had the second patrol boat turned loose under the charge of his deputy. He gave instructions that four blasts of the yacht's siren should be understood as a signal for the smaller craft to return to *The Hialdo.*

It was learned beyond doubt at Atlantic that the Doctor and Ethel had been there. There were a score of witnesses to the fact. The entire hamlet was loud in its praises of this stranger, who, by his skill, had saved a life without thought of fee. Captain Ichabod's anxious inquiries elicited the information that there was indeed a Dominick rooster aboard the tender, perched on the forward deck. One boy, of a fine imaginative mind, declared that the bird was tethered by a string tied to one of his legs. That false information stirred the wrath of Uncle Icky, so that he was moved to mutter:

"Yep, I reckin they're a-savin' 'im fer broth—consarn 'em!"

At the principal store in the town, soon after the arrival of the yacht, there was a scene of unusual excitement. Conspicuously posted was the notice typewritten by Van Dusen of the reward for Doctor Garnet's capture. But here sentiment was overwhelmingly strong in the physician's favor. A local orator made an impassioned speech to defend this wonderful physician, who had shown such ability in saving of life without charge. He insisted that the townsfolk should throw out the "furriners" who desired the arrest of such a man.

Van Dusen was in a desperate hurry, but when he sensed the feeling of the crowd, he was at pains to tell them, very simply, the facts. He declared that, in all probability, the physician who had been guilty of the kidnapping was a crazy man.

After touching at Atlantic, it was decided to sail the yacht to the northward, along the mainland shore, with the little red skiff still in tow. There was more depth of water on this side and, in consequence, a larger number

of inhabited points, from which news might be gathered. At the end, there was a lighthouse, where the keeper would have seen every boat that passed.

The yacht stopped at the Squire Goodwin landing. There they learned of the recent presence of the physician and his patient. Thence, they went on to the lighthouse, where they were reassured by the keeper's firm assertion that the tender had not passed. It seemed to Van Dusen now that the little boat must be bottled up, so that its discovery and capture could be only a matter of a few hours. But there still remained one tract to be explored.

For the voyaging over these shallows, the red skiff was needed. The three men entered it, cast off from the yacht, hoisted sail, and set forward toward the desolate land of the sand dunes, the wild ponies, the goats and the beach-combers. . . . And it was Captain Ichabod who sat in the stern, handling proudly both sheets and tiller.

CHAPTER XX

The Truth Unalloyed

THE lowly home where Ethel had passed the previous night was as a palace compared with this structure of beach-provided boards and shingles, over the threshold of which she was ushered, supported on the arm of her protector, Doctor Gifford Garnet. As she stepped over the sill, she had a sense of apprehension, that ran over her flesh like chills. They were the physical expression of fright. She was downright afraid of this dark, dank, dungeon-like room. Her emotion was emphasized by a realization that her escort was a mentally unbalanced, drug-mad man. Ethel, realizing something of the danger in her environment, had set herself to carry a bold demeanor. She would not let the man know either her fears or her suspicions.

She meant to assume toward him an air of confidence.

There was a single window in the room, which had a wooden shutter, swung on leather hinges. This was closed, so effectively that not a particle of light filtered in from outside. It was only by the illumination through the open door that any light entered. Ethel hobbled across the room to the window, and threw open the shutter.

The setting sun threw its rays freely into the interior of the shack, as the girl looked about her. She saw tiers of bunks on either side. In the center of the room were a table and some rough chairs. An oil lamp stood upon the table. In a corner of the room were a cook-stove and the ordinary utensils for cooking. A curious conglomeration showed on some shelves at one side. In some of the bunks, there were blankets. Ethel regarded those blankets with satisfaction. They would mean warmth for the night, should she be compelled to spend it here.

The Doctor's nerves did not improve. While the girl dropped down to rest on one of the uncomfortable chairs, he walked the floor to

and fro in silence. His muscles were twitching, and his eyes were wide-lidded, though the pupils were only pin-points.

Ethel watched him closely. Now, when at last her suspicions were aroused, she studied as if for her own salvation every aspect of this man, whom at first she had looked on as her savior, but now regarded with a dread unspeakable.

At last, to relieve the tension of her terror, she requested the Doctor to go out to look for a sail or any craft that he might hail. He went obediently enough. As soon as he had left the room, she moved her seat so that she could watch him.

He walked hurriedly to the boat, where, using water from the jug, he prepared another measure of the drug and shot it into his arm. When he had done this, he raised the vial that had held the pellet of morphia, and stared at its emptiness with affrighted eyes. Then, at last, with a cry of utter despair, he cast the bit of glass into the sea. The watcher understood that he had used the last atom of the drug. The knowledge filled her with new dismay. She had already learned something

as to what must be the tortures of the drug-addict deprived of his supply.

After vainly scanning the horizon for a few minutes, Garnet returned to the hut, carrying the girl's blankets in one hand, the water jug in the other. When he had set the jug by the stove, he went to the cleaner-looking of the bunks, where he deftly arranged the blankets for his patient.

The sight of his preparations brought an increase of Ethel's distress at the prospect of a night to be passed in the company of the distraught man there before her. In her misery, she murmured passionate prayers for the coming of her lover to save her from the unknown perils of the night. Her situation seemed to her desperate beyond endurance. Yet, she could not fly from it by reason of her injured ankle. She had no recourse but to remain inactive, helpless, in an agony of dread. She could not take comfort from the thought that the man had always treated her with scrupulous respect. Now, he was no longer sane, and his past courtesy could offer no promise for the future. Had she but known, she might have been comforted by the fact that

the long-continued secret indulgence in morphia had killed in him every desire and passion save one—a mad craving for the drug itself, and for more, and more.

Ethel urged the Doctor to share with her the food provided for them by Mr. Goodwin. But he refused, declaring that he was too greatly worried over the misfortune in which she was involved. The girl then decided that she would not dare to sleep while the crazed man was present with her. She determined to remain in her seat. She was so worn with fatigue that she did not dare lie down on the comfortable blanket, where she would be unable to resist falling asleep. So she sat huddled in a mood of sick misery, while the Doctor ceaselessly paced to and fro the length of the hut, like a wild beast caged.

Presently, Garnet halted, and insisted that Ethel should lie down in the bunk to rest. This she refused to do, and she persisted in her refusal when urged a second and a third time. But, after her third refusal, Garnet regarded her with an expression of utter despair. Then he spoke, in a changed voice, shaken with emotion.

"Miss Marion, I believe that you have become afraid of me!"

Having uttered the words, he sank down heavily on one of the vacant chairs. His breath came hard and fast. He seemed like a man about to suffer a stroke of apoplexy. Then, suddenly, he burst into tears.

The man's loud sobbing stirred the girl's sympathies. She even felt a little guilty, since her conduct had caused this final outburst of wretchedness. She was eager to soothe him. Certainly, he could not be dangerous now. She hobbled across the room toward him.

But the physician ceased his sobs at her approach. He sat erect and by a brusque gesture checked her advance. He spoke to her in a toneless voice.

"Miss Marion, when first you regained consciousness, you asked me to tell the story of your kidnapping. Owing partly to your condition at that time and partly to a certain dread of my own, I only gave you a part of the story. I promised to tell the rest later. That time has now arrived. I have waited for a moment when I should feel that you had

lost confidence in me, for the moment when I should know that you no longer trusted me. I delayed because I hated to confess my weakness. I wished to appear before you still as a strong man. And let me assure you that you are not in any slightest danger from me. It is true, I am a nervous wreck. And yet, at this moment, my mind is clear. I realize that the time has come for me to make my confession to you. In the hope that it will render your judgment of me less harsh, I shall tell you my whole story. It begins back in the days when I was taking my course in the medical school."

Ethel was amazed over the change that had so abruptly taken place in the man. It seemed indeed that he had recovered, at least in some measure, his accustomed poise. He appeared less afflicted with nervousness in this new eagerness to talk. She returned to her chair and again seated herself. There she sat in rapt attention as she listened to the weird narrative of a great man's folly and degradation. As the tale unfolded, the girl's heart was like a lute swept by chords and dissonances of emotion. She was thrilled to

horror, moved to strange sympathy; by turns fearful and sympathetic.

"I believe," the Doctor went on, "that I was a more than ordinarily hard-working student. Night after night I burned the midnight oil. I was ambitious to forge ahead. I was eager to finish my course and to begin the practice of the profession that I so deeply loved. I was possessed by a feeling that I had been created for this calling. I believed that I was destined to obtain eminence in my chosen career.

"Everything went well until I became friends with a certain young tutor in the university. He noticed that I was working hard, and that sometimes I would begin the day tired and depressed, when, naturally, my mind would not be as bright as it should be. . . . The man was a vampire of viciousness—only desirous to corrupt. . . . And I was an easy mark! The only excuse I have to offer is my age.

"This man was a drug-fiend. He used morphia slyly, knowing full well what the outcome must be. It was that hideous knowledge that made him eager to enchain others,

even as he himself was enchained, so that he would not be alone in the final catastrophe.

"One day when I was in the dumps, he came to me, placed his hand on my shoulder, and said:

"'Gifford, come with me. I want to make a new man out of you.' . . . He did!—the kind of man you'll know me to be when my story is done.

"I went with him to his room. From a small bottle, he handed me a pellet, with instruction to swallow it. I must ask no question—merely return to my work, and see if it did not ease my labors. I did as directed. I found the promised relief—I could do wonders. Very soon, I became the leader of my class. There were no questions asked. Whenever I felt depressed, I went to the tutor's room and he came to my rescue.

"It was nearly a month before I was certain what he was giving me. As you, Miss Marion, have trusted me as a friend, so I trusted this man. One day I went back to this fellow for more 'Brain Food'—as I had innocently begun to term it. I had been

accustomed to entering his room without knocking, but on this occasion the door was locked. He heard me rattling the knob, and called out to know who was there. I shouted in answer and said it was Garnet after more Brain Food. He then unlatched the door and admitted me. His coat was off and one arm was bare. Upon a small stand was a hypodermic outfit. I was surprised, for I had never seen the fellow take medicine of any kind. He laughingly remarked that I was just in time—that he was not feeling quite himself and so was taking a little Brain Food 'the other way.'

"I guessed now that the drug I had been taking was indeed morphia. For a moment, I was startled and alarmed. But the fright was of short duration. I had already developed a craving for this thing that so helped me on with my work. The tutor bade me remove my coat, roll up my shirt-sleeve, and allow him to give me a little Brain Food in his way. Needless to say, I did as he ordered. That was my first 'shot'. . . . Years ago, that man killed himself—perhaps in remorse

for his crime against me and others corrupted by him."

The Doctor sat silent for a long minute in brooding contemplation over this beginning of the vice that had mastered him, and now threatened at last to destroy him.

"It was not long after this," he resumed, still with that toneless monotony of voice, "that I began my life-work. Sometimes, I would go for long periods without resorting to the needle. That has helped me in the deception of my patients. For long intervals, I could endure without the drug. Then, during periods of great mental strain and physical depression from all-night vigils, I would invariably fall back upon my old Brain Food. Occasionally, such a relapse would develop into what might be termed a morphia spree. It was at the time of my last spree that—to my destruction, and your discomfiture and suffering—I was called to treat you aboard *The Isabel*."

It seemed to Ethel that Doctor Garnet wearied of his long discourse. He now arose from his chair, and once again he began to

pace the floor uneasily. It appeared that he was debating in his mind whether or not he should continue his narrative.

Ethel, moved to pity by the man's evident deep distress, suggested that he should put off the further telling until morning when he would be rested. She urged him to repose in one of the bunks until the morrow, after which she would listen to him again. But to this he objected, declaring that he had made up his mind to tell the whole story. Unless she should refuse to listen, he would continue. Ethel admitted her willingness to hear the remainder of the narrative.

"I suppose," the Doctor continued, still in that dead level of monotonous recitation, "at the time that I boarded the yacht that you were suffering so greatly from your injured ankle that you did not detect my deplorable condition. Of course, I should not have gone in answer to your call. But I realized that you were alone, and I had explicit instructions from your father to care for you. So, duty called me. Then, after administering to you a sedative of extra strength, in

the next instant I injected more of the death-dealing drug into my own arm. From that moment, the Doctor Garnet that you knew and trusted became a Mr. Hyde. Gifford Garnet did not wish to do you harm——"

"But——"

"But Mr. Hyde became obsessed with an insane desire to have you—a young woman absolutely pure in heart—to have you enjoy with him the wonderful sensations derived from the hideous drug to which he was subject."

The revelation, shocking as it was, brought a profound relief to the listening girl. The confession shone like a sun through the mists of fear that had fallen upon her. She listened now in a mood, not of fright, but all of pity.

"I told you when you asked me about the fate of the kidnappers that the ring leader had escaped. That was the truth. He did escape. But he's here to-night, a prisoner—a confessed criminal, in your hands, Miss Marion.

"I drugged the man in charge of the yacht.

Then I chained him to the engine. When he aroused from his stupor, I had everything ready for the yacht's sailing. I forced the man to answer the bells as given from the bridge, under penalty of death. The most of the time I kept you under the influence of my drug. Much of the trip is a blank to me. Why we were not swallowed up in the great waters of the Atlantic, I cannot understand. It must have been, Miss Marion, that God stretched out His Arm to save you. . . . At the time the yacht struck and was destroyed, I was a raving maniac.

"Then, somehow, I once again became sane. That was while I watched an old fisherman, who rescued you from the pounding seas.

"At last, I remembered the man chained to the engine. It was fear of him that made me flee. When the kindly old fisherman went in search of a physician for your sake, I was wild with the desire of flight. I could see always the accusing eyes of that man there in the depths of the sea, staring up at me—his murderer! . . . So, I took you and fled with you in the tender."

Ethel looked at the man, whom she had known and trusted as the family physician, with widened eyes of horror. This trusted friend, by his own avowal, was not only thief and kidnapper—he was a murderer!

CHAPTER XXI

Sealed Orders

DOCTOR GARNET, seeing the effect made upon the girl by the conclusion of the story, did not approach her or try to relieve her, as had been his wont. At the moment he felt himself too low, too despicable, to lay his hands on this fair girl, even as a physician. Moreover, he knew that it would not be long ere she recovered her calm. Indeed, only a few minutes elapsed before Ethel had passed through the crisis of her emotion. Her mind clear again, she stared at the man with an unconcealed repugnance, under which he cringed. She thought with dismay of the dreadful thing Doctor Garnet had done. She even wondered now with new distress as to what her friends must have thought concerning her secret departure. It seemed to her that the truth was too fan-

tastic a thing to be credited by the world at large. It would scoff at this explanation of a young girl's sailing for days with a man, practically alone, on her own yacht. She shuddered at thought of the slanders sure to be her portion. How her father would grieve over this disgrace of his daughter! How Roy—— Appalled, she thrust the terrifying thought from her mind. . . . And there was the murder of the caretaker! Would the public not believe her an accomplice, by consent at least, in that forcible holding of him to the engine?

Ethel's thoughts veered to Roy again. But, now, there was something of comfort in her musing. It occurred to her that he at least would believe the truth, though all the rest of the world should mock at it as a lie. Besides, there was the message she had thrown into the sea for him, which she had seen picked up by the fisherman. There was no doubt in her mind now that Roy had received it. There came a little glow of courage in her heart as she reflected that even at this very moment he was searching desperately for her. . . . Had she been outside the

cabin just then, she might have seen the lights of *The Hialdo*, on which her lover was being carried to Beaufort, there to receive the news of her having left Ichabod's Island alive.

A new courage for herself left her free to feel compassion toward the miserable being who had done her such grievous wrong. She could guess in some measure from the man's lined and haggard face and twitching body how great was his suffering and remorse. From the fact that he had made such a full confession of his guilt, she knew that he would make every restitution in his power. Sympathy for him, added to sympathy for herself, proved too much for her self-restraint. Woman-like, she hid her face in her arms outstretched on the table, and wept.

After a little while, the fit of weeping ended. The girl brushed away the tears, and again sat erect. Then, for a long time, neither she nor the man opposite her moved or spoke. What, indeed, was there for her to say to him who had made her his victim? She had not the heart to reproach him. She could find no word of comfort. It seemed to her that

there could be no assuagement of his misery —that he were better dead. If he lived, he must be a fugitive from justice, or, if captured, he must be tried and condemned for murder. Or he might end his days in a mad-house. Surely, death were preferable.

But Ethel knew that Doctor Garnet, despite her earlier belief, was not mad. Notwithstanding the tortures he endured, his narrative to her had revealed a mind lucid and sane. She wondered suddenly if, after all, it might be possible somehow to save him from the law's penalty? Yet, the damning evidence of the murdered man in the wreck of the yacht could not be concealed. The consequence of it would be that there could be no safety for the guilty one—at least on this continent.

That last phrase brought inspiration to the girl. There flashed into her mind a thought of another continent, where death was riding ruthless over countless thousands. There, under a new identity, this miserable creature might return to his manhood, might once again exercise his great skill in behalf of suffering

humanity, might indeed atone for the past, might win a martyr's crown. . . . If he could but be smuggled out of the country!

It was hours past midnight now; a ghostly trace of dawn showed in the eastern sky. The physician, it was evident, was fighting desperately against the anguish induced by his abstinence after over-indulgence in the drug. But, presently, he noted through the open doorway the lightening of the horizon. Once again, now, he spoke to Ethel.

"Miss Marion, it's near daylight and the wind is still holding to the same course it was blowing yesterday. I see little chance of getting away from this place until there is a change. It is, I should judge, about twenty miles to Portsmouth. With your permission, I shall set out for there at once, in order to procure a boat and then return to you. I'm sure that I can make it. I shall be spurred on by two of the strongest incentives: one is my anxiety in your behalf; the other—for I shall be frank with you—is my anxiety to reach a physician. I know that unless I can secure relief within a few hours I shall become insane."

He paused for a moment, and then added in a voice surcharged with emotion:

"This has been a terrible night. It was a horrible ordeal for me to make my confession to you. But now I feel the better for it. I have fought my hardest to retain my self-control, and I have succeeded thus far. Now, if you can only continue to be brave for a few hours, I'll have you safely on your way home."

"But do you consider that you are equal to the trip, Doctor?" Ethel inquired doubtfully. "Twenty miles is a long, long distance for one in your state of body and mind. Oh, how I wish my ankle was fit, so that I could stand the journey! But, of course, you most certainly have my permission, Doctor Garnet. That is, on one condition."

"And what is that condition, Miss Marion?"

"I want you to go under sealed instructions. I shall write these out and give them to you, but you must not read them until you have gone ten miles up the shore. Before you answer, let me tell you that in those instruc-

tions you will find nothing but what is to the best interests of both yourself and me."

"I owe you every obedience," the Doctor declared instantly, though there was a note of astonishment in his voice. "It shall be as you wish."

At her request, Doctor Garnet provided Ethel with his fountain-pen and some pages torn from his memorandum-book. She wrote her instructions hurriedly, folded them and gave them to the physician, who bestowed them in his coat-pocket. Then, with a short word of farewell, he set forth on his journey, while the girl, standing in the doorway, looked after him with brooding eyes. When he had disappeared from view, she seated herself on the doorstep and mused for a long time on the curious adventures through which she had passed, and of which the end was not yet come. She felt a great content over being thus alone, gladdened by a sheer relief at the absence of the Doctor. She no longer felt any fear, and presently she limped across to the bunk that had been prepared for her, where she quickly fell asleep on Ichabod's blankets. When at last she awoke, it was

after a sound slumber of some hours, for the sun was now high in the heavens. She found herself greatly refreshed, and a desire came on her for the added refreshment of a plunge into the sea. There was no sign of a human being anywhere within sight, so she undressed and entered the water.

When her bath was ended, and she was again clothed, Ethel found a stick to serve her as a cane, and with its aid made a halting ascent of one of the sand dunes. She was surprised and pleased at the manifest improvement in her ankle. There remained little pain, even when her weight bore upon it in walking, and the swelling was greatly reduced, so that she was able partly to button her shoe over it. From the crest of the sand dune, she was able to look out over a wide expanse of the waters all round-about.

To the eastward, she could see for miles out over the bosom of the Atlantic. Far away in the distance, she saw a large steamer headed toward the north. At sight of it, she was swept with a sick longing to be on board, bound back to home and lover. Scattered over the surface of the Sound were vis-

ible many small sails of the fishing boats, darting to and fro, many skirting the shore. These were, however, located far away to the southwest, miles distant from where she stood. It was evident that, for the time being at least, there would be no opportunity to signal for help. A sudden realization of hunger drove her back to the shack.

Ethel gathered sticks from the shore for the rusty ramshackle stove. She lighted them with matches brought from the tender. Soon she had water boiling for coffee, and presently, with the remnants left from Mrs. Goodwin's supply, the girl was able to make a meal that seemed wonderfully savory to her sharpened appetite.

As the day lengthened, Ethel's mind busied itself with the problem of finding a means to signal her presence. There was always the possibility of the physician's failure to reach his destination. Prudence demanded that she herself should make every effort possible for relief. From her reading, she remembered how shipwrecked castaways in similar plight had used a shirt or any white garment as a flag of distress. She saw a net-pole lying on

the strand, which, she believed, she could drag to the top of the sand dune, in spite of her ankle's weakness. Her muslin petticoat would serve as the banner. The idea no sooner presented itself than she proceeded to its execution. The moving and the erection of the heavy pole taxed her strength to the utmost, but it was at last accomplished, and its white flag fluttered bravely in the light breeze. Ethel looked with pride on her achievement, and dared to believe that her father, could he have seen her now, would have praised her courage and resourcefulness. She felt oddly like a soldier who has scaled the wall in the face of the enemy, and planted his flag in triumph on the rampart—though hers was a flag of truce. She surveyed her work complacently, though every muscle was aching from long-continued digging in the shifting sand with her bare hands and the tramping it into firmness about the pole.

When again she glanced out over the Sound, Ethel saw off to the northward a small skiff sailing toward her. Even at this distance, she was sure that it was approaching her refuge. It was evident that her signal had

She sat down and stared eagerly.

been seen. She sat down, and stared eagerly. She felt suddenly faint in the reaction of joy over the prospect of rescue. Then, a minute later, the castaway was forgotten in the woman. She hastily pulled her signal banner from the pole, wadded it under her arm, and hurried down the dune to the hut. Having accomplished its extraordinary purpose so valiantly, the white flag should now disappear to perform its ordinary useful service.

And as the signal banner came down, there sounded a clarion note, as if of victory, from the crest of a neighboring sand dune. It was the crowing of Shrimp, still bold to challenge the world.

But Ethel gave no heed to the bird that had been her companion for a time in misfortune. It occurred to her that she ought not to go away from this place in such fashion as to leave Doctor Garnet to worry over her fate, should he return and find her gone. She decided that she would offer her rescuers a sufficient payment to wait throughout the day for his return, before taking their departure.

Now, the boat was putting in at some little

distance up the shore. But there could be no doubt that a landing was intended, for the little sail had been lowered, and one of the men was sculling toward the beach with an oar.

CHAPTER XXII

The Parting Crow

IN this particular case, the cock crowed, not thrice, but once. Indeed, the single triumphant call was all that was necessary. It was as if the vainglorious fowl was aware that he had been a figure in a tragedy, as had been no other of his kind since the time when Saint Peter made craven denial of his Master.

There was no possibility that Captain Ichabod could be deceived as to the identity of the creature's voice. As the boat drew in toward the shore to investigate the significance of the white flag that had fluttered from the sand dunes and had then so abruptly vanished, the old fisherman, hearing the cock's crow, turned to the detective and Roy Morton, and spoke vehemently:

"Men, did ye hear that? Whar are your

ears? I'll jest be John Browned if that wa'n't my ole rooster Shrimp a-crowin'! Why, men, I declare to goodness if it ain't a fact as sure as shootin'. I'd know that bird's hide in the tan-yard with the feathers off. It's him, men —an' if he's thar so is the gal!"

The all-important feature of the chase with Ichabod hitherto had been to find Ethel. Not only on his own account, but for the sake of Roy, whose deep distress aroused his sympathies. Now, however, when he heard his old feathered friend lift up a lusty voice as if in salutation, the fisherman for the time being forgot the graver aspect of their quest. A new emotion dominated him: He must see Shrimp—at once! Forthwith, then, he dropped the sheets, and sculled vigorously toward that part of the beach whence had issued the sound of the crowing.

When the boat grounded, Ichabod excitedly hastened forward, climbing the steep slope of the nearest dune. Roy and Van Dusen followed him, for they believed in the accuracy of the old man's observation that the girl must in truth be somewhere near his pet.

As the three reached a cleared space above the thick growth of bushes about the base and sides of the dune, Uncle Icky, who was some distance in advance of the others, stopped short. He stood for a few seconds in silence, peering intently ahead. Then he cried out in a loud voice:

"Wall, I'll be eternally damned!" He pointed a bony forefinger. "Now, what do you men think o' that? It's him, all right, but, by cracky, the ole devil, as well as myself, has changed consider'ble in his attitude toward the other sex, since last we met! Don't ye see, men, he's a-scratchin' an' a-kitvka-dawin' thar fer three hens!"

Both the old man's hearers burst out laughing over this comparison of the rooster's conduct to Ichabod's own, of which they had been given a full account during their voyaging together.

"Wait a minute, folks," he called out as he trotted forward, "till I gits my Shrimp, an' then I'll jine ye!"

Ichabod gave his whistle, so familiar to the rooster, as he walked forward. The feathered ex-alarm clock, now become a gay

Lothario, looked up from his pecking and scratching. Then, seeing his old Island companion approaching, Shrimp hurriedly scurried off into the thick growth of bushes, and as he went he issued an authoritative call to the hens to follow, to which they rendered prompt obedience. Ichabod halted, and stared for a moment in dismay. He made no attempt to continue the pursuit. He realized that the old rooster had had a taste of real life, like himself he had come to realize the mistake of living alone on an island of sandy waste, far from the society of the gentler sex. As the old fisherman returned to his companions he spoke gravely:

"Wall, I don't know as how I can blame him. If he's gittin' as much pleasure out o' his new life as I aim to git out o' mine, I don't believe as how he orter be disturbed. He sure was a faithful alarmer, an' I don't see any reason why he shouldn't make a good husband an' father o' a family."

The three now descended to the shore line. They had made their landing in such haste that they had failed to see the little tender lying in the cove a short distance below.

Then, presently, the eyes of the three fell on the shack. Roy halted as abruptly as had Ichabod at the sight of Shrimp, though with a vastly more poignant emotion—for in the window he saw the face of the girl he loved. As he saw the smile of recognition and blissful welcoming, he set out on a run for the cabin. A moment later he disappeared within it.

Ichabod and the detective discreetly refrained from following Roy at once. They gave their attention instead to a sailboat that was approaching. They took the newcomer —for the boat had only a single occupant— for a fisherman seeking to win the reward, though they could not understand why he should be coming from the northward. The watchers were still further puzzled when the boat, instead of bearing shoreward, abruptly shifted its course and swung in a wide circle, returning the way it had come. The two men then walked to the tender, which, as it was now low tide, lay fully exposed on the beach. At sight of the shorn propeller, they understood the reason of the interrupted voyage. But they could make no guess as to the

whereabouts of Doctor Garnet himself. They waited with feverish impatience for the appearance of Roy, with such information as he should have gathered from Ethel. In the meantime, they kept a sharp lookout all about, in the hope that the physician, being only temporarily absent, might reappear at any moment.

At last, Roy issued from the cabin. He carried a chair in his left hand, while his right arm supported his betrothed. He placed the chair on the shady side of the shack, and tenderly bestowed the girl in it.

Ichabod and Van Dusen came forward. Ethel greeted the detective warmly as an old acquaintance, and thanked him gratefully for the part he had played in the rescue. But she looked with bewilderment on the leathery visage of the fisherman. She was sure she had seen the face of the old man somewhere once before, but she could by no means find a precise recollection of time or place. Then Roy spoke in introduction of Ichabod to her, and explained the mystery.

"This is Captain Ichabod Jones. To him, Ethel, you owe your life. It was he who res-

cued you from the wreck of *The Isabel*, and faced death himself to do it. To him also we owe our discovery of you here."

Ethel bestowed so radiant a smile on the old fisherman that he fairly thrilled with pleasure.

"You must tell me the whole story some time soon," the girl said, after she had uttered a few phrases of earnest thanks.

"Miss Marion," replied Captain Ichabod, "jest the pullin' o' a poor drowned woman out o' the water arter the waves has laid her right smack at your feet, an' then a-pumpin' a little swallered brine out o' her lungs don't call for no fuss like what you an' Mr. Morton makes over it. It'd be a mighty-sorry human what'd a let you lay thar an' die. That's the way I feel 'bout it. 'S'fur's findin' o' ye here is consarned, that hain't so."

He pointed at Roy as he continued:

"Thar's the feller what found ye, an' if thar's any other thanks a-comin' they'd orter go to an old rooster, what used to live with me. Which flighty bird eloped with you an' that tallow-faced Doctor. His crowin' did the business."

The Captain chuckled.

"An', by cracky, I'm a-thinkin' from what we jest see that he's already got his reward!"

Van Dusen, who had been showing signs of restlessness, now interrupted.

"I have a professional reputation at stake," he declared, a little grimly. "I quite understand that you two lovers are perfectly happy in being thus reunited again. But there still remains a duty to perform. I must catch Garnet. Please, Miss Marion, tell me where he has gone, what his intentions are."

"He is off on a mission of mercy," Ethel replied. "He has gone to get a boat to come back here for me."

She explained in detail concerning the physician's project.

"I expect him back at any minute," she concluded. "If you folks will sit down and wait patiently, your quarry will come to you."

Van Dusen asked some further questions, which the girl answered frankly, to all appearance. The detective was convinced that he had, as she suggested, only to remain in waiting at the shack, to make sure of capturing his man within a few hours. He dismissed his

anxiety concerning Garnet, and for the gratification of his curiosity, begged for a full narrative of the events that had happened after Ethel regained consciousness.

The girl did not demur, but told the whole story of her dreadful experiences. The three men sat spellbound as they listened to her dramatic recital. They were thrilled by that climax when in the desolate hut the physician at last made his full confession to the girl.

As Ethel came to the end of her account, Van Dusen addressed Roy with a note of self-gratulation in his voice.

"Now, what do you think, Roy Morton? You remember that night on *The Hialdo* when I gave you my opinion of this affair? You remember, I said that such cases are rare, but that in the end we should find this whole affair to be the work of a drug-crazed man, dominated by a fixed idea—that he must steal this young lady away, and, by force if necessary, make her a sharer with him in a drug orgy. I told you, too, that I did not believe her life or person in any danger whatever, unless through accident. And there's another point: This Doctor Garnet should go

to a mad-house, rather than to prison and the electric chair."

The day was drawing to a close now, with the sun hardly an hour high above the trees that lined the western horizon. Uncle Ichabod declared that Garnet should have sent help long before, if he had safely reached Portsmouth. The fisherman gave it as his opinion that the physician must have met with serious trouble on the way, or that he must have deliberately deserted Miss Marion. He further suggested that he and the detective should leave Roy and Ethel for an hour or two, in order to search along the shore for a possible trace of the missing man. But he amended this plan a moment later by advising that Roy should take the girl in the skiff and make sail for the yacht, which was vaguely visible at anchor some miles away. Afterward, a seaman could bring the skiff back for himself and Van Dusen.

This proposal met with ready acceptance by all concerned. The lovers embarked and sailed away while the fisherman and the detectives set forth on their scouting expedition along the shore. But before starting, Ichabod

pulled off his shoes and stockings and rolled up his trousers. It was his custom to go barefooted, and he had no mind now to be handicapped in the long tramp by the foolishness of footgear—suited only to town and the presence of Sarah Porter.

As he passed among the dunes, Captain Jones heard once again Shrimp's lusty crowing. He whistled, but the bird remained invisible, only crowed again, with a note that sounded almost derisive in the ears of his old master.

Ichabod grieved a little over the defection of his old friend. Then, quickly, his mood lightened. He would have through the years to come a companion infinitely more desirable.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Search up the Shore

IT was fairly good walking up the shore, so that the two searchers were able to make excellent progress here. Much of the way the waves had pounded the beach until it was hard and level as a floor. But in places the sand was strewn with quantities of sea shells, many of them broken. These troubled Van Dusen a little, even though he wore heavy-soled shoes. He wondered that the barefooted Ichabod experienced no discomfort to all appearance. As a matter of fact, the old fisherman's soles were horny, tough as any leather.

As the two journeyed on, the detective gratified his natural curiosity concerning things round-about by questioning his companion. He was especially interested in the small bands of wild ponies that appeared from time

to time. These, like himself, were inquisitive, and often would stand gazing with curious eyes, until the men were within a hundred yards of them, before they would show their heels and go cantering off through the deep sand.

Ichabod, though he answered at length all the questions put to him by the detective, kept up a train of thinking apart. He showed the results of it presently when he spoke.

"Do ye know, Mr. Detective," he began, "I've been a-thinkin' a whole week 'bout that poor cuss what me an' you are a-tryin' to run down? Do ye know, from what that pretty gal says, I don't say as how that feller orter go to a jail house? Thar's a heap o' good left in that man yit. Jest think what he done out thar in the Sound a-savin' o' the kid! That wa'n't the act o' no beast—not by a damned sight!"

"Yes, Captain," Van Dusen answered, "I'll admit that was not the act of a beast. But don't you think that a man becomes worse than a beast when he allows the craving for drugs to destroy mind and body and to prompt

him to acts such as those of which this degenerate has been guilty?"

"But, Mr. Detective," the fisherman argued, "that man was led astray. Seems as if, 'cordin' to my way o' thinkin', this case is a heap like that o' a poor gal what's led off when she's young. It don't make no difference what happens arterward. The folks, women 'specially, won't give her no credit, no matter how hard she tries to go right. They jest naturally kain't see no good in her. Ye see, I used to know a gal like that. But she was smart. She up an' moved clear out o' the country, an' started life all over ag'in. It's right-smart hard to believe, but, sir, that gal married a preacher, an' worked a durn sight harder fer God than a heap o' the ones that she up and left behind did! Them poor fools are still a-talkin' 'bout her. Now, Mr. Van Dusen, do ye exactly have to arrest Garnet if we find him?"

"Well," the detective answered, "since he's a murderer any one has the right to arrest him. For my part, I have no right to take him in charge for the other things he's done. I have no warrant, an' I'm not a state officer."

"What I'm afeard of," Ichabod went on, "is that while he's a-sufferin' so, an' so full o' remorse, he'll do away with himself. If he don't do that now, I 'low as how he's a cured man. It's my opinion that feller will never hit the dope ag'in. An' if he don't, he's too valuable a man to lose. If we come up with him, let's me an' you see if we can't git him to do what that kind-hearted little girl wanted him to—go off somewhars under another name an' work fer his feller human bein's, an' fer God. A man, when he does it right, is a-workin' fer Him when he practices medicine!"

Unaccustomed emotion vibrated in Van Dusen's voice as he replied:

"Captain, you yourself would make a good one to work for the Master. You have a heart! And, in my profession, I find many, both men and women, who are heartless. I would not willingly put a straw in the way of Garnet. But, just the same, for the love of God and man, think what his guilt is."

The old fisherman wagged his head in assent.

"Yes, I admit he has done a heap o' evil.

But, Mr. Detective, the closin' words that man said to Ethel Marion are still a-ringin' in my ears. I hain't got much edicatin, but I can repeat 'em jest like she said the Doctor said 'em. Here they be: 'My only hope now is to return you safe to your friends an' to do my utmost to explain these most unbelievable circumstances. I care nothing fer my own future. It is ruined, an', like a good patient, I am ready to take my medicine.'"

As the old man ended his quotation from the Doctor's farewell to Ethel, Van Dusen suddenly pointed a little way ahead.

"Unless I'm greatly mistaken," he exclaimed, "he has already taken—or been given—his medicine. That looks to me like a yachtsman's cap down there on the beach. You said he was dressed in yachting costume."

The two men hurried forward. When they reached the cap, which was weighted down with a shell, the detective picked it up and found a note pinned to the top of it. Captain Ichabod glanced about him with apprehension at thought of the tragedy that might have occurred here.

Van Dusen unpinned the note, opened it and read aloud.

Just beyond where they were standing there was a sort of false inlet. It does not show as an inlet upon the map. Nevertheless, at times it allows the water to cut clear across the Core Banks. Except at high tide, it is shallow. But it is not safe for fording by those who do not know the way, for the bed of it abounds in treacherous quicksands. It was indeed at this point that Captain Jones had feared lest Garnet, a stranger, might meet with disaster. Now, it seemed likely that he had.

Van Dusen unpinned the note, opened it, and read aloud:

"To the World:

"I hope to cross this unknown channel in safety, for the sake of the young woman, Ethel Marion, who is pure and innocent. I have spent my energies in order that the world might be benefited. But in zeal to win the fame for myself while helping others, I resorted to drugs to give me a capacity for strength beyond that apportioned to me by my Creator. Let my guilt serve as a warning to every professional man who desires to be of service to his fellows. There can be no gain to humanity from a folly that must cost him his own soul.

"Gifford Garnet."

Ichabod burst forth excitedly as the reading ended.

"Thar, now, didn't I tell ye that feller was no beast? The poor man! I wonder if he did get over all right. Maybe he has jest really destroyed himself, an' meant to, but didn't want folks to think he was that kind o' a coward."

Van Dusen shook his head.

"No, I don't believe he meant to kill himself. I believe he meant to try his best to cross, but feared he might be swept away and drowned."

Ichabod bade the detective wait while he himself should ford the inlet in order to look for tracks in the sand on the further side. He reached the opposite shore safely, and there moved to and fro along the water's edge for a time, apparently making a close search. Van Dusen awaited a signal, but there was none. At last, Ichabod reëntered the water and crossed to where the detective awaited him. In answer to the mute inquiry of his companion's gaze, Captain Jones shook his head sadly as he spoke.

"Mr. Van Dusen, thar hain't a doubt in

my mind but that God A'mighty will be mighty easy with that feller at the judgment seat."

The two slowly retraced their steps toward the cabin. The detective purposely lagged a little. He wished to save his companion from over-exertion. He had never hitherto seen a man of such advanced age endure so much strenuous physical activity, and he feared that it might bring ill consequences. As a matter of fact, of the two, Ichabod probably felt less fatigued.

It was dark by the time they reached the landing. A sailor from the yacht was in waiting for them with a motor-equipped tender, similar to that of *The Isabel.* The man had already made his painter fast to the disabled boat, ready for towing it back to the yacht. Very quickly, the detective and fisherman were aboard, and the little boat was chugging sturdily toward *The Hialdo.* Van Dusen reflected, almost with a sigh of regret, that his work was practically at an end. There remained only to make a report to the Collector of the Port and the Justice of the Peace at Beaufort. He would exhibit to them

the cap and the accompanying note, and thus the case would be done with. The evidence would eliminate Doctor Garnet from further consideration.

Ichabod regarded the detective as a man of extraordinary experience and ability. He proposed to avail himself of the wisdom here ready to his need.

"Mr. Van Dusen," he demanded suddenly, "air ye a fambly man?"

"I suppose," was the answer, given with a smile, "you mean by that, am I so lucky as to have a wife and children."

"That's it!" Ichabod agreed.

"No, my friend, I am sorry to say that I am not. I suspect I'm one of those fellows that will keep putting it off until it's too late. But, why do you ask?"

"I reckon the reason is," the old man said very solemnly, "cause I'm goin' to be, myself, an' that right soon. An' I thought if ye was, ye might be able to give me a little advice 'bout the pre-nuptals, as Sarey calls 'em. She mentioned it, an', to tell ye the truth, I didn't know the meanin' o' the remark. Is it something pertainin' to weddin'

frocks an' things, or air ye like me, igornant? She said, jest before I left, that it'd take a little time for the pre-nuptals, an' since I ag'in realized how unsartin life is, I sorter thought I'd like to have it over with to-morrer."

Van Dusen smiled.

"I don't think you need to worry, Captain Ichabod," he declared soothingly. "I think the pre-nuptials will be satisfactorily adjusted by you without any trouble. All you need to do is to walk up to your girl to-morrow, and wave before her the five-thousand-dollar check Roy Morton's going to give you as your reward. So long as you have the wherewithal for the post-nuptials you don't need to worry about the pre-. Then you might tell her that there's a fine yacht all ready to take the two of you north for a honeymoon trip."

Van Dusen dropped his bantering tone and spoke with great cordiality.

"Leaving all joking aside, Captain, here is a splendid chance for you. I'll take you and your bride all the way to New York, or I'll drop you at any port you like between. I know that Roy and Miss Marion will be de-

lighted by this chance to get better acquainted with the man who made their reunion possible. They owe everything to you."

"Yes," Ichabod retorted; "an' I owe them a heap, too. It's that girl that started the whole change in my way o' thinkin'. She caused me to decide to take on a fambly an' happiness. I don't much like what ye says 'bout that-thar five thousand, though. Ye see, we folks down this way don't go round savin' lives fer pay—that is 'ceptin' the coast-guard boys. What we does is fer the feelin's that possess us. Why, do ye know, if thar's airy man in Cartaret that I didn't think'd do what I did, an' more, in this scrape, I'd head a passel o' men to run him clean into the swamps fer keeps!"

"It's a legally posted reward offered for the discovery of Ethel Marion," Van Dusen explained, "and there is no question as to its being rightfully yours. You need have no scruple about taking it. But Roy and his sweetheart will convince you as to that, even if I can't."

Ichabod appeared dubious for the moment. Then his face wrinkled in a grin, for he had

found a method whereby to satisfy his conscience in the matter.

"Wall," he declared judicially, "I has lost consider'ble time from my fishin'." Then his enthusiasm overcame his air of reticence. "Whoopee! Five-thousand dollars! I cal'late that sure will cut out them pre-nuptals—whatever they be."

CHAPTER XXIV

A Gentleman's Promise

ROY and Ethel stood by the rail on the yacht's deck as the tender drew alongside. They were filled with anxiety over the results of the search upon the shore. Dismay touched them when they saw the cap that Van Dusen carried in his hand as they stepped forward. Ethel's cheek blanched, but she asked no question; only stood waiting while the detective stepped aside with Roy and gave him Garnet's note. The young man hastily read the message. For a moment, he mused as if in doubt concerning its significance; then he asked:

"Do you think that he made the crossing in safety?"

"I think not," was the reply. "Captain Ichabod went through the channel to the other side. He looked everywhere for signs of Garnet's having continued on up the beach,

but the search was fruitless. I have an idea that the Doctor, in his weakened condition, was unable to breast the tide, and so was carried out to sea. To my mind, it seems, perhaps, the best ending for that drug-crazed man. At the same time, I confess I'm heartily sorry for the fellow. Had there been any way to get him clear of the charges it would have been necessary for him to face, I for one would have been willing to go to any length to save him, to get him away to some place where he was not known and could begin life anew."

Roy showed the note to Ethel, and explained how the evidence seemed to indicate that the physician was dead. The girl listened quietly, but when her lover had made an end, she turned quickly and went away to her stateroom, to be alone with her grief.

During Ethel's absence the yacht was got under way for Beaufort. Van Dusen and Ichabod restored their energies by a hearty meal. By the time the moon had risen, the party of four were gathered aft, talking together quietly, and enjoying the beauties in the panorama of sea and shore and sky unfolded

by the yacht's progress. There was rapture in the hearts of both lovers in this reunion after so great trials. Each of them had sailed over these waters in an agony of grief and fear while they were separated from each other. Now, they were once again together. The fear and the peril were things of the past. For the present, there was only joy, a joy that would endure for the days to come.

Van Dusen explained to the others how he had extended an invitation to Ichabod to make use of the yacht for his honeymoon-trip. Ethel was astonished and delighted to learn of the old fisherman's romance and his intended bridal on the morrow.

"But, do you know," she exclaimed with a smile, to Captain Jones, "I supposed, of course, you were married, and had grandchildren?"

"Not me!" the old man answered, unabashed. "But I do aim to!"

Van Dusen further explained that the only thing now wanting was the consent of the bride herself to the plans. He then spoke again of the reward to be paid to Ichabod. Roy declared that this should be made out immediately. Once again, Captain Icky pro-

tested against the payment, but without much heart in his objections, and finally, after mumbling something as to the time lost from his fishing, he consented to receive the amount. But on a condition. He stipulated that the check should be made out to Sarah Porter, and that in the left-hand corner there should be written the words:

"In lieu of all other pre-nuptals."

The fisherman gave it as his positive opinion that this would clinch the matter for the following day.

"Anyhow," he added grimly, "if it don't, I'll be dogged if she gits it!"

When the yacht reached Beaufort, the party went ashore, for it had been decided that Ethel should be cared for at the Inlet Hotel, where, if need be, she might prove of service in persuading Sarah into meeting the ardent Ichabod's wishes.

The hostess greeted the girl warmly, and fussed over her with a maternal solicitude that promised well for the fisherman's hopes in the matter of grandchildren. Then, when she had seen her guest comfortably installed, Sarah returned to the porch, where Ichabod,

armed with the check, was anxiously awaiting her.

"Oh," she exclaimed tenderly, "I'm so glad you have returned safely! I've really worried about you. I was afraid that dreadful man might do something terrible if you came upon him unexpectedly."

"No, sir," was the spirited retort; "there ain't nothin' kin git me now but you!"

The gallant remark so pleased the spinster that she patted his hand affectionately, as they sat down side by side on a porch settee.

Ichabod braced himself for the encounter. He felt that there was to be no shilly-shally now. Moreover, his backbone was amazingly stiffened by the five-thousand-dollar check. He meant business! Besides, it would never do to disappoint his new friends. He was going to make that honeymoon-trip, or "bust!"

"Sarah," he began, "do ye remember as how in the old days I was always said to be a man o' very few words?"

"Why, yes, Ichabod," Sarah agreed—perhaps a little doubtful, "come to think about

it I believe you were. But what's agitating of you to-night? There seems to be something heavy-like on your mind."

"Thar is, Sary—somethin' mighty big an' I reckin as how you'll think it sudden. But that's the only way to do—jest speak right plumb out an' have it over."

His hearer paled slightly. She had a horrid suspicion that her lover had backslidden, that he meant to return to his hermit life on the Island, and was here now to jilt her.

"Of course, ye understand that me an' you are promised to wed?" Ichabod went on.

"Yes," came the faltered response.

"Wall, thar ain't but one thing now as I see it that is a-standin' in the way, an' that is them-thar pre-nuptals you mentioned when I wanted to hurry things a leetle. Now, what I'm a-comin' to is this: I'm mighty well aware that them things takes time an' costs money. In lieu o' them as the lawyers say I'm servin' ye with this"—he extended the check—"an' we'll fix the hull thing up in the mornin', an' sail no'th in the evenin' on my New York friend's yacht, for our after-nuptals. But, consarn ye! thar's jest one other con-

dition: Sure as shootin', ye'll have to pay our way back!"

Sarah took the check to the light. She gasped as she read the four figures. There was awe in her voice as she pronounced the words aloud:

"Five-thousand dollars!"

Then, after a moment, she questioned seriously:

"Ichabod, are ye goin' to build the addition on the hotel besides?"

The old fisherman nodded emphatically.

"That," he stoutly declared, "was a gentleman's promise!"

Sarah capitulated.

"Ichabod Jones, I ought to call you a triflin' rascal for starting in to scare me like you've done. Anyhow, I jest can't make it earlier than eleven-thirty. Will that do?"

The fisherman's reply was to take Sarah in his arms. Roy and Van Dusen in the hotel lobby hailed the smack that followed as a signal of the wooer's success.

CHAPTER XXV

Doing His Bit

ICHABOD saw Ethel come out on the porch and take a seat at the far end. He somewhat hastily released Sarah from his arms, with the explanation that he ought to leave her free to make her preparations for the wedding. The spinster, blushing with happiness and excitement, hurried to busy herself with making ready for her new state of full womanhood. Just as Roy reached Ethel's side, Ichabod joined the two with the glad tidings of his sweetheart's acceptance of the "pre-nuptals." The fisherman's apprehensions concerning too much publicity for the wedding ceremony led him rather shyly to suggest that it should take place on board *The Hialdo*, away from the prying eyes of the townsfolk. He explained that he didn't know which would be worse—

the small boys, or the older devils, or the cacklin' hens.

Immediately after the bank opened next morning, the cashier readjusted his enormous bone-rimmed spectacles in order to study a check presented for deposit by Miss Sarah Porter. Then he espied the phrase concerning "pre-nuptals" in the upper left-hand corner, and that was sufficient, for he was a man of shrewdness. He passed the news along to every person that appeared before his wicket. In less than half an hour, the whole town was agog over the astounding intelligence that the old maid, Sarah Porter, was engaged to be married. There remained the mystery as to the identity of the bridegroom. But this was speedily cleared up by the genial Doctor Hudson, who made no scruples of advertising his old friend's happiness. The result was that by the time set for the ceremony, the whole town was out, waiting in eager anticipation. It was indeed a season of great excitement. Here was an opportunity to celebrate an event that was at once amazing, romantic and historic. Captain Ichabod had been known by them

for twenty years as an inveterate woman-hater. During that same score of years, as her friends could testify, Sarah Porter had refused no less than seven excellent offers of marriage. Now, these two were to marry. The citizens, with one accord, marveled and rejoiced.

Yet, no one criticized the match. The two were universally liked and respected. While the townsfolk wondered and smiled they did not jeer. But they were resolved to make a demonstration of their appreciation. They meant to give the wedded pair a "send off" to be remembered.

Sarah, assisted by three of her closest friends, passed the whole night in making ready for the momentous occasion. By nine o'clock in the morning, her trunk was safely aboard the yacht. Immediately after her return from the bank, Captain Jones escorted her aboard *The Hialdo*—before the townspeople had any suspicion of what was going on. They were quickly followed by Doctor Hudson and the clergyman. Van Dusen bustled in after them, having finished the paying off of the chartered boats.

The ceremony was duly performed. A woman's dream of years at last became reality.

Van Dusen suggested that the newly wedded pair should go ashore to receive the congratulations of the crowd that now thronged the water front. But Ichabod, having in mind pestiferous small boys, steadfastly refused any such exhibition of himself and his bride. His opinion of them would have been confirmed could he have overheard their questioning of Doctor Hudson, which was: Had he examined their teeth to see how old they were?

Nevertheless, the townsfolk, though they got no sight of the principals in the affair, cheered with a lusty good-will. And, too, they dragged a cannon down to the shore, where the gunner fired a salute of twenty-one thunderous explosions. The Collector of the Port, who alone knew that this was an honor reserved for the President of the United States, inquired curiously why this exact number was chosen. The gunner replied seriously that it represented the bride's age.

At Uncle Icky's request, the yacht sailed first for the coast-guard station. Here, he

had no hesitation in proclaiming his new state and in receiving the congratulations of his friends—for there were no small boys to trouble. He explained the whereabouts of Shrimp and the hens, with a request that they should be rescued from the barren stretch of sand. The coast-guard men promised that the little flock should receive a home at the station itself. Thus, the old fisherman's last concern with the old life was happily ended. In a moment apart, he made a final entry in the diary.

"Through with Shrimp and the shack, by heck! My weddin'-day! Hooray!"

It was owing to a request by Ethel to Van Dusen that the yacht's course was to Portsmouth that night. Early next morning, before the others were stirring, Captain Ichabod rowed Ethel in a small boat from *The Hialdo's* anchorage to the town. They were absent for a full three hours. On her return, Ethel spoke with enthusiasm of the town's quaint charm, but she gave no details of her visit there, not even to Roy. The old fisherman said nothing at all of the trip, not even to Sarah Jones.

The wedded pair, though urged to prolong their stay on the yacht, insisted on leaving when *The Hialdo* reached Norfolk. They took with them a promise from their new friends to come south again in order to attend the opening of the new Inlet Hotel.

. . . . . .

Colonel Marion was appointed to head a mission to France for study on the war-methods there. On his return to New York from Texas, he urged Ethel's immediate marriage, before his sailing. Naturally, there was no objection on the part of the lovers, and the father was able to depart tranquil in the assurance that his daughter would be safe in her husband's care.

One morning a few months later, as Roy and Ethel sat at breakfast, the servant brought him a letter with a Paris postmark, which was addressed in the familiar hand of Colonel Marion. Somewhat surprised that the letter should be to him rather than to Ethel, Roy opened it and read:

"DEAR ROY:

"Just a few lines to give you the surprise of your life. I have found that our old friend, Doctor Garnet, was

not lost in the quicksands, as you supposed. On the contrary, he is here in France, doing noble, wonderful work in the branch of his profession that he always loved—surgery. I understand that he has been decorated several times. And also, strange to say, he is going under his own name. I am sending this news to you instead of to Ethel direct, because I feared the effect of a sudden shock on her. You can break the information to her gently.

"With love to the dear girl,

"Your father,

"STEPHEN MARION."

Roy had little alarm lest his wife should suffer any ill effect from what she would regard as the best of news.

"My dear," he asked at once, "would you be greatly surprised to get authentic information that Gifford Garnet is alive and doing wonders in his profession of surgery? Would you believe it, if I should tell you that he has been several times decorated for his services on the battle front in France?"

To his astonishment, Ethel showed no extraordinary excitement, though her face grew radiant.

"No, Roy," she replied, "I should not be surprised, but I should be very glad!"

"Your answer sounds strange to me," Roy declared, with a puzzled glance across the table. "Anyhow, you are calm enough so that I don't need to hesitate in telling you that your father's letter to me actually contains this astonishing news."

"Thank God, Roy!" Ethel said reverently. "The madman has become sane again. Thank God, he did obey my sealed orders."

Roy stared at his wife in open bewilderment.

"What on earth do you mean, Ethel?" he demanded. "Have you been keeping something from me?"

"Yes, my dear husband, I've been guilty of just that thing. I've just been waiting and praying for the hour when I could come to you and give you the very information that father has been able to send you. I'll tell you the whole story. But, first, I must exact a promise. For Ichabod's sake, as well as my own, you must not breathe a word of the truth to Arthur Van Dusen."

Still mightily wondering as to the meaning of all this mystery and eager for its solution, Roy readily gave the required promise that

he would keep Ethel's secret. Thereupon she told him the story.

"The night Arthur and poor old Ichabod returned to us aboard *The Hialdo* with the Doctor's cap and note, I believed as firmly as you did that the unfortunate man had been swallowed up in the quicksands, or swept away to death by the tide. At the time when he left me alone in the shack in order to go for help, I would not let him go until he had agreed to carry with him sealed orders under which he should act. I wrote these and gave them to him, and he promised to follow my instructions. They were for his future guidance. I believed that, if he followed them, he would not only escape punishment, but reform so as to be of service once more to the world. Naturally, when help did not arrive from Portsmouth, I concluded that his strength had not been sufficient for the task, that he had perished. So, I was not surprised by the news brought to the yacht by the men who had been searching for him.

"That morning when I visited Portsmouth, Roy dear, I had two objects in view. One was to verify the fact that Doctor Garnet had not

reached the town. The other was to visit the young physician whom I knew to be located there, in order to arrange with him to care for the afflicted man in case he should arrive later on. As I was about to leave the yacht, early in the morning, Captain Ichabod appeared."

Ethel's gravity vanished for a moment. Her lustrous eyes narrowed and twinkled. She smiled until the dimples in her cheeks were shadows against the rose.

"I suppose he stole away from the fond Sarah while she was asleep. He never could have managed it had she been awake." She became serious again, and Roy, whose mouth had widened in an appreciative grin, again listened with sober attention.

"Captain Ichabod had a confession to make to me. That confession was vastly more of a surprise to me, as you will soon understand, than this news in father's letter. The old fellow first swore me to secrecy. Then he out and told me, not without a certain exultation at his shrewdness, that he had put one over on the greatest detective in America, Arthur Van Dusen. He explained that when he and

Arthur reached the false inlet where they found the cap and note, he believed that Doctor Garnet had crossed in safety, for the channel was by no means so dangerous as he represented to the detective. As a matter of fact, he hoped and expected to find the Doctor's tracks on the other side, and he did so alhough he concealed the knowledge of their existence from Van Dusen. Ichabod went on to tell me that he was moved to sympathy in Doctor Garnet's behalf, that he believed the man would reform, would be of use to the world, that he was worth saving from the law's punishment for offenses inspired by a drug-maddened brain. He insisted that he told no lie to Arthur—only allowed the world's greatest detective to draw a few wrong conclusions from his vague remarks and the melancholy expression on his face when he returned after crossing the inlet to look for tracks.

"Right then and there, that old fisherman and I formed a partnership. We decided that we would locate our man, save him from capture, and have him restored to the normal. This would be comparatively easy

since the authorities believed him to be dead. We would demand in return that he should go to France, there to serve those sufferers on the battlefield who might have need of him.

"Ichabod preferred to remain behind, when I went to the physician's house. There I found that Doctor Garnet had in fact been received by the young doctor, who had taken him in and cared for him—proud indeed to do so, since he knew his patient's reputation and held him in veneration for his skill. The younger doctor readily entered into a conspiracy with me when he had heard my story. I had an interview with Doctor Garnet. He accepted my proposition fully. He was glad of a chance to expiate his follies. He swore to me that never again would he take a grain of the drug. At his request, I brought Ichabod to his bedside, and he thanked the old man warmly for all that he had done both for himself and for me, his victim. I offered him funds for the trip abroad, but he told me that he was well supplied with money. He told me also that he had come in a small sail-boat to carry me away from the shack, but had seen on approaching that his services

were no longer needed, so had returned whence he came. . . . From that day until now, I have had no word of the man. Yet, I felt that he had kept his promise."

"And he did—nobly!" Roy said. There was a new admiration in the glance with which he regarded his wife, who had accomplished this miracle of regeneration.

Ethel met that glance, and smiled responsively.

Once again she dimpled, as she spoke half-seriously, half-playfully.

"Roy, dear, aren't you just a bit proud of your wife and Uncle Ichabod? Between us we so worked it out that my kidnapping was not in vain. It has done three things: First and best, it hurried our marriage; second, it made Captain Jones a bridegroom instead of a hermit; third, it furnished a hero for the battlefields of France."

END